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Research Report 3

Child Maintenance and  
Enforcement Commission

# Evaluation of the Child Maintenance Options Service

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Views expressed in this report are not necessarily those of the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission or any other Government Department.

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## Glossary

Child maintenance	Financial or other support that the non-resident parent gives to the person with care generally, but not always the other parent, for the care of the children.
CM Options service	The Child Maintenance Options service is a service for separated parents offering free and impartial information and support about child maintenance. References to the service in this report refer to users of the telephone helpline, although there is also a website and face-to-face service.
Compliance	The extent to which a non-resident parent adheres to a child maintenance agreement.
Contact	Contact between the non-resident parent and child or children after separation. This includes different levels and types of contact, for example, overnight stays, telephone or written contact. It also refers to contact between parents after separation.
General group	The group of parents who contacted the Child Maintenance Options service themselves, or were referred to the service via a route other than Jobcentre Plus.
Jobcentre Plus group	Parents who came into contact with the Child Maintenance Options service after being referred by Jobcentre Plus.
Other financial support	Any other kind of money or financial exchange between the non-resident parent and parent with care or child that is <i>not</i> part of a maintenance arrangement, for example, paying bills, buying things directly for the child or parent with care.

Non-resident parent (NRP)	The parent who the child or children do not live with, or who they live with for the minority of the time after separation often, but not always, the father.
Parent with care (PWC)	The parent who the child or children live with after separation, or who they live with for the majority of the time often, but not always, the mother.
Private arrangement	A child maintenance arrangement made between parents not involving the Child Support Agency (CSA) and or courts. This is the same as a 'family-based arrangement' referred to in the Green Paper published in January 2011 (DWP, 2011), but the term private arrangement is used throughout this report as that is the term that was used in the interviews with parents.
Shared care	Situations where the child lives with both parents exactly 50 per cent of the time after separation – also known as 'equal shared care'.

# 1 Summary

This is a summary of findings from an evaluation of the Child Maintenance Options service (CM Options service). The National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) was commissioned by the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission (The Commission) to carry out the evaluation in late 2008.

The main aim of the study was to find out the effect of the CM Options service telephone helpline on parents using it and specifically whether or not parents were more likely to make child maintenance arrangements following their contact with the service. The study collected information on the demographic and economic characteristics of the CM Options service clients, as well as information on how they used the service, their views of the service and the maintenance arrangements parents had made.

The sample was drawn in six tranches, between February and September 2009, to try to ensure that it covered a relatively long-running period for the service. Telephone interviews were done in two stages with the same clients. The first interviews were carried out two to four months after contact with the CM Options service between May and December 2009. The second stage of interviews took place six months after the first interviews between November 2009 and June 2010.

The sample is made up of two groups of parents: 77 per cent of the sample were referred to CM Options from Jobcentre Plus and the remaining 23 per cent came into contact with the service through other routes and are referred to in the report as the 'General' group<sup>1</sup>. In total 2767 CM Options service users were interviewed at both stages. The sample did not include users of the CM Options website or face-to-face service who had not also used the telephone helpline, and it should be noted that the CM Options service has undergone changes since the sample of parents was drawn.

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of writing the proportions of clients using the CM Options service had changed slightly to 70 per cent referred by Jobcentre Plus and 30 per cent who came into contact with the service another way.

## 1.1 Parents who use the Child Maintenance Options service

Most users of the CM Options service were lone mothers from low income households. In order to understand some of the differences between parents using the service, latent class analysis was used to group parents who had similar separation characteristics (such as the bitterness and length of separation and the quality and level of contact between ex-partners). The following groups of parents were apparent:

- The '**long-term, bitter**' group of parents had been separated from their ex-partner for a long period of time and were more likely to have had a bitter separation and little or no current contact compared to other groups. They were more likely to have more children, be older and to have re-partnered. This group was the largest at 41 per cent of the sample.
- The '**medium-term, contact**' group of parents had been separated for a moderate amount of time and there was a range of acrimony in terms of the separation and current relationship. There was likely to be some, less frequent contact between the parents and the non-resident parent and child. They were also more likely to have re-partnered. This group comprised 21 per cent of the sample.
- The '**recent, friendly, contact**' group of parents were more recently separated and were more likely to have a friendly relationship with their ex-partner and regular contact between ex-partners and the non-resident parent and the child compared to other groups. This group tended to have fewer, younger children, a higher proportion of lone parents, benefit claimants, and they tended to be younger. This group was around 16 per cent of the sample.
- The '**recent, mixed, contact**' group of parents were recently separated and had a range of experiences in terms of how bitter the separation was. There was regular contact between parents and the child and non-resident parent. This group also had a greater proportion of lone parents, men and fewer benefit claimants compared to other groups. This group was slightly more than 18 per cent of the sample.
- The '**never in a relationship**' group of parents were not in a relationship with the other parent of the child when the child was conceived. Very little contact between parents or between the non-resident parent and child was maintained. They were more likely to be benefit claimants and tended to have a lower income compared to the other groups. This was the smallest group comprising just four per cent of the sample.

## 1.2 How parents use the Child Maintenance Options service

The interviews gathered data about parents' use of the CM Options telephone service and website (where the website had been used in addition to the telephone helpline):

- Most calls were either five to ten minutes (46 per cent) or 15 to 30 minutes (39 per cent) in length and 66 per cent of parents reported having just one telephone conversation with the CM Options service.
- Seventy-one per cent of parents had discussed different types of child maintenance arrangements. Newly separated parents, where there was more contact between ex-partners and the non-resident parent and child, were more likely to discuss private arrangements.
- Fifty-seven per cent of parents recalled being signposted to other relevant organisations by the CM Options service and 50 per cent had received leaflets following the call.

Ninety-one per cent of parents had not been in contact with the CM Options service in the six-month period between the first and second interviews. Of those who had:

- Most reported call lengths of either five to ten minutes (39 per cent) or 15 to 30 minutes (40 per cent).
- Thirty-five per cent of parents had one additional call with CM Options, 27 per cent had two calls and 39 per cent reported having three or more additional calls.
- Seventy per cent of parents had discussed the different types of child maintenance arrangements available.

Only around one in ten parents reported using the CM Options service website at the first (15 per cent) or second (9 per cent) interview, with the General group being more likely to have used it at both stages.

Parents were positive about how helpful they found their contact with the CM Options service overall, with 67 per cent reporting that it was either very helpful or quite helpful.

### 1.3 Parents with child maintenance arrangements

- Fifty-six per cent of parents had child maintenance arrangements in place at the second interview, eight to nine months after initial contact with CM Options. The General group were more likely to have an arrangement in place than the Jobcentre Plus group. Parents who were more recently separated, and where there was regular contact between the non-resident parent and the child and between ex-partners, were more likely to have a maintenance arrangement in place, with 76 per cent of parents in the 'recent, friendly, contact' group having an arrangement, compared to 44 per cent of the 'long-term, bitter' group.
- Thirty-two per cent of all parents had an arrangement in place at the time of the CM Options call which was still in place nine months later. Twenty-four per cent of parents had made an arrangement following contact with CM Options. Parents who were recently separated were much more likely to have made an arrangement following contact with CM Options, as were the General group compared to the Jobcentre Plus group.
- Private arrangements were the most common type of arrangement, with 56 per cent of parents with arrangements having a private arrangement. Forty-one per cent of parents had arrangements made through the CSA. The General group were more likely to have made a CSA arrangement than the Jobcentre Plus group.
- Among groups of parents who had higher levels of contact between ex-partners and better quality relationships, private arrangements were more common than CSA arrangements. Whereas for parents who had been separated for longer and had very little contact, CSA arrangements were more prevalent.
- The report looks at whether parents have an arrangement that 'works' eight to nine months after contact with the CM Options service. The definition used in this report for a working arrangement is a CSA, financial private or court arrangement where the amount of maintenance is always or usually paid on time; or a non-financial private arrangement that is always or usually adhered to. Using this definition, 64 per cent of parents with arrangements had working arrangements and 36 per cent did not.
- Parents where there was more contact and a better quality of relationship between ex-partners were more likely to have a working arrangement, with 81 per cent of those in the 'recent, friendly, contact' group having a working

arrangement, compared to 50 per cent of those in the 'long-term, bitter' group.

- Arrangements that parents saw as 'working' were more likely to be private arrangements rather than CSA arrangements.
- Sixty-two per cent of parents thought their arrangements were fair. The Jobcentre Plus group were more likely than the General group to think their arrangement was fair, as were those with private arrangements compared to those with arrangements made through the CSA.
- All parents were asked how happy they were with their maintenance situation regardless of whether they had an arrangement or not. There was a range of views: 40 per cent of parents were happy compared with 44 per cent being unhappy.
- Those who were more recently separated and who had a better quality of current relationship with their ex-partner were more likely to report being happy, as were those who had private arrangements. Parents with CSA arrangements and those without arrangements were the most unhappy: 34 per cent of parents with a CSA arrangement and 38 per cent of parents without arrangements said they were very unhappy with their maintenance situation, compared to 11 per cent of those with private arrangements.
- Seven per cent of parents had a maintenance arrangement which had broken down between the two interviews. The most commonly cited reasons for this breakdown were that the non-resident parent did not pay (64 per cent) and that the non-resident parent could not afford to pay (33 per cent).
- Financial support outside of a maintenance arrangement was more common for parents with a private arrangement. Seventy per cent of parents with a private arrangement reported having some form of additional financial support compared with 28 per cent of parents with a CSA arrangement and 25 per cent of those with no arrangement.

#### **1.4 Parents without a child maintenance arrangement**

- Forty-four per cent of parents did not have a maintenance arrangement in place eight to nine months after contact with CM Options. Approximately one in three parents without maintenance attributed this to their ex-partner

being unwilling (29 per cent) or unable (34 per cent) to pay for maintenance, or that they did not know where their ex-partner was living (29 per cent).

- Of those with no arrangement, 52 per cent were parents who had been separated for a long period of time and where there was little contact between parents and the non-resident parent and child.
- Parents who had been referred by Jobcentre Plus were more likely to say the reason for no arrangement was due to the level of contact with their ex-partner, such as not having or wanting contact with their ex-partner. Parents in the General group were more likely to report that their ex-partner objected to paying maintenance and that they had tried to make an arrangement in the past, but it had not worked.
- Parents in the 'long-term bitter' and 'never in a relationship' groups were more likely to report issues to do with contact with their ex-partner, compared to parents in other groups, and the 'long-term, bitter' group were more likely to report domestic violence. The more recently separated groups (i.e. the 'recent, friendly, contact' and 'recent, mixed, contact' groups) were more likely to report that their ex-partner could not afford to pay maintenance.
- Forty-three per cent of CM Options service users without arrangements reported that they were 'not at all likely' to make an arrangement in the future. However, 32 per cent reported they were either 'very likely' or 'likely' to make an arrangement.
- The length of separation, level of contact between parents and the non-resident parent and child appeared to be key in how likely parents thought they were to make an arrangement in the future, with the least likely being those in the 'long-term, bitter' group.
- The majority of parents who reported being unlikely to make an arrangement in the future attributed it to issues around contact with their ex-partner or their ex-partner being unwilling or unable to pay.



## 1.5 The effect of CM Options service contact on child maintenance arrangements

The study measured the effect of the CM Options service telephone helpline. A standard way to assess what effect the CM Options service has on parents, would be to compare outcomes for parents using the CM Options service with a suitable comparison group of non-users. However, for various reasons it did not prove possible to follow this approach in the evaluation, primarily because for data protection and practical reasons access to a suitable comparison group could not be gained. Due to this difficulty an estimate has instead been made by using the method described below.

The analysis compared a matched sample of parents referred from **Jobcentre Plus only**. The matched sample comprised two groups: the 'low use' comparison group with no or very limited interaction with the CM Options service and parents who had a more substantial contact, the 'moderate to high use group'. The outcomes for the 'low use' comparison group<sup>2</sup> were used to estimate the counterfactual for the 'moderate to high use group', i.e. what would have happened in terms of maintenance should they have had no, or very limited, contact with the CM Options service. In order to ensure any differences in terms of maintenance between the two groups were not caused by other factors, the 'low use' group and the 'moderate to high' use group were matched on a range of factors known to predict maintenance, using propensity score matching.

In addition to measuring the overall effect of the CM Options service, it was also possible to look at the effect of the service on those *within* the 'moderate to high use' group. This was done by creating a typology of ways of using the CM Options service using latent class analysis. Four groups were identified in this analysis with a broad hierarchy in terms of the level of contact each group had with the CM Options service.

- **Group 1:** This group had a **high level of in-depth, personalised contact** with the CM Options service. They had longer and multiple calls with the service in which they had discussed a wide range of topics. They had a very positive reaction to the call agent and were more likely to have been sent, and to have read, leaflets than the other groups of parents.
- **Group 2:** This group had a **moderate level of in-depth, personalised contact** with CM Options. They also had longer and multiple calls in which they discussed a more limited range of topics compared to Group 1. They

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<sup>2</sup> The 'low use' comparison group were made up of parents who did not remember contact with CM Options or who reported a call with CM Options of less than one minute where they had not discussed any topics (such as their family circumstances or child maintenance options).

had a positive reaction to the call agent and were more likely to have been sent, and to have read, leaflets following the call than parents in Groups 3 and 4.

- **Group 3:** This group had a **low to moderate level of personalised contact** with CM Options. They tended to have had one shorter call in which they had discussed a more limited range of subjects than parents in Groups 1 and 2. They had a very positive reaction to the call agent.
- **Group 4:** This group had **brief, less personalised contact** with CM Options. They also had one shorter call with the service and a mixed reaction to the call agent. They discussed the fewest topics of all groups.

The effect of the CM Options service was measured across a range of outcome measures.

- The primary outcome was whether the CM Options service had any effect on the likelihood of parents making an arrangement following contact with the service.
- The secondary outcomes were: the type of arrangement (private and CSA) that was in place and whether the arrangement was working or not.

In terms of the primary outcome, approximately seven per cent of parents referred from Jobcentre Plus in the 'moderate to high use' group had a maintenance arrangement following their contact with the CM Options service that they would otherwise not have had. This effect was only found amongst those Jobcentre Plus parents who had the most in-depth and personalised contact with the CM Options service, Groups 1 and 2. There was no apparent CM Options effect on parents in Groups 3 and 4, or on parents who were not in contact with their ex-partner.

In terms of secondary outcomes, the effect of the service appears to be broadly similar on both of the main types of arrangement: arrangements through the statutory system and financial private arrangements; with an increase in both these types of arrangements being observed. Some of these additional arrangements were working, some non-working, although there is some evidence that the CM Options service helps to ensure arrangements are working.

Note that as this analysis was not carried out on the General group the assessment of effect is only relevant to those parents referred to the service by Jobcentre Plus, which at the time of writing made up 70 per cent of users of the CM Options telephone helpline.

## 1.6 Conclusions

The aim of the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission is *'To ensure that the maximum number of children who live apart from one or both parents benefit from an effective maintenance arrangement'* (Child Maintenance and Other Payments Act 2008, Part 1, clause 2(1)). This study suggests that the CM Options service does help to achieve this aim for parents referred by Jobcentre Plus. The effect of the service is not minor considering the low intensity of intervention, with most parents having just one or two short telephone calls. The effect of the service for this group is to increase the proportion of parents with a maintenance arrangement by about seven percentage points (for those with a moderate to high use of the service) with this increase seen in both private arrangements and arrangements through the CSA. The CM Options service is most effective for those parents who have the most in-depth and personalised contact with the service, with no effect apparent for those with a briefer, less personalised type of contact.

Over two-fifths of parents who had some contact with the CM Options service did not have a maintenance arrangement eight to nine months later. This study suggests that at least some of these parents might be in a situation where they do not face too many barriers to making an arrangement – for example, the groups of parents who are more recently separated and where there is regular contact, but who do not currently have an arrangement. There will also be parents – who have little or no contact with their ex-partner, and who have been separated for a long time – for whom making arrangements would be particularly challenging.

## 2 Introduction

This report presents the findings from an evaluation of the Child Maintenance Options service (CM Options) telephone helpline. The Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission commissioned the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) to carry out the evaluation in late 2008. The study involved two stages of telephone interviews with parents using the CM Options telephone helpline over a period of six months between February and September 2009. Interviews took place between May 2009 and June 2010. The main aim of the study was to assess what effect the CM Options service had on parents using it, specifically whether or not parents were more likely to make arrangements following their contact with the service. As well as assessing the effect of the CM Options service, the study also collected a wide range of information about parents using the service: the demographic and economic characteristics of CM Options service clients, how parents use the service and their views of it and the maintenance arrangement parents made following contact with the service.

### 2.1 Policy background

The Child Support Agency (CSA) was introduced in 1993, but faced a number of well-publicised problems. In 1997, the incoming Labour Government brought forward a series of reforms to speed up and simplify the child support system and to ensure that parents with care claiming benefits saw a direct financial benefit when child maintenance was paid. At the same time the CSA's powers to enforce payment were strengthened. These changes, which were mainly contained in the Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000, were introduced in March 2003. This new scheme saw some successes over the old scheme, however, it also had lower compliance rates. As a result, the CSA accumulated large amounts of debt which was officially described as 'probably uncollectable' (DWP, 2008, Table 22).

In February 2006 the Labour Government decided that a fundamental overhaul of the system was required to address the structural problems faced by the CSA. The Henshaw Report, published in July 2006 (DWP 2006a), recommended that the CSA should be closed down and replaced by a new organisation responsible for a radically redesigned child maintenance system. The Government quickly indicated its acceptance of the main thrust of the Henshaw Report's recommendations (DWP 2006b) and these were brought into force in the form of the Child Maintenance and Other Payments Act, 2008.

The Act introduced a new non-departmental public body, the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission, which took over responsibility for the child maintenance system from the DWP. The main objective of the Commission was to 'to maximise the number of those children who live apart from one or both of their parents for whom effective maintenance arrangements are in place' (Child Maintenance and Other Payments Act, 2008, Part 1, clause 2 (1)). It aimed to do this through its three core functions: first to promote the financial responsibility that parents have for their children; second to provide information and support on the different child maintenance arrangements available; and third to provide a statutory child maintenance system with effective enforcement (Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission, 2010). The CM Options service had the responsibility for fulfilling the second function and at the time of writing, the CSA provided the statutory maintenance system, although a new child maintenance scheme is planned to be launched from 2012. As well as bringing the Commission into existence, the Child Maintenance and Other Payments Bill also introduced several other key changes. It removed the legal requirement for parents with care claiming Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance to apply to the CSA for child maintenance. It also introduced better financial incentives for parents with care on benefits to claim maintenance, and for non-resident parents to pay it. The amount of maintenance a parent with care claiming benefits could keep on top of benefit payments rose from £10 to £20 in 2008, and in April 2010 these parents were allowed to keep all child maintenance they received without it affecting their benefits.

In October 2010 it was announced that the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission would cease to be a non-departmental government body, under the Coalition Government's plans for public body reform and would transfer to the DWP. In January 2011 the Green Paper 'Strengthening families, promoting parental responsibility: the future of child maintenance' (DWP 2011), proposed a radical reshaping of the statutory child maintenance system. One of the key aims of the proposal was to encourage separated parents to make 'family-based arrangements' (known as private arrangements throughout this report) by supporting their access to relationship support services and introducing charges to parents for use of a more efficient statutory system which would replace the CSA.

## 2.2 The Child Maintenance Options service

As discussed above, the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission was responsible for two bodies: it took over responsibility for the CSA and was tasked with setting up the Child Maintenance Options service (CM Options service). The aim of the CM Options service was to 'provide free, impartial information and support to help people make informed decisions about the type of maintenance arrangement that best suits their circumstances' (Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission (2010), p.18). This information and support service is delivered through a national telephone helpline, a website and a face-to-face service. The CM Options service helpline started taking calls in May 2008, and was made available to all parents in October 2008.

At the time of the survey, the CM Options service aimed to support separated parents by providing them with information about the three different child maintenance arrangements that are available to them, specifically a 'private' arrangement<sup>3</sup> made just between the parent with care and non-resident parent, an arrangement via the CSA or the court system. As well as providing information about child maintenance it offered support in actually setting arrangements up and gave parents information about other organisations that can support them with other issues they might also be facing at the time of separation, such as housing or debt issues.

Initially, the main route into contact with the service was referral from Jobcentre Plus. Parents who put in a claim for Jobseeker's Allowance or Income Support to Jobcentre Plus were referred to the CM Options service (unless they chose to opt-out of referral). During the first two years of the service, other referral routes were also being set up (for example, from HM Revenue and Customs) and the proportion of parents calling the service themselves, rather than being referred, has risen. At the time of writing (June 2011) approximately seven in ten of CM Options service customers came into contact with the service via a Jobcentre Plus referral and three in ten via other routes.

## 2.3 Aims of the evaluation

The evaluation has two key aims:

- To assess what effect the CM Options service has on parents;

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<sup>3</sup> Private arrangements are the same type of maintenance arrangement as 'family-based arrangements' that are referred to in the Green Paper 'Strengthening families, promoting parental responsibility: the future of child maintenance' (DWP 2011). The term 'private arrangement' is used in this report, however, as that is the term that was used in the interviews with parents.

- To find out to what extent parents have been able to make child maintenance arrangements following their contact with the CM Options service.

These overarching aims break down into a series of smaller research questions:

- To what extent have parents who use the CM Options service been able to make effective child maintenance arrangements?
- Are parents who use the CM Options service more likely to be able to make effective child maintenance arrangements than parents who do not use the service?
- What are parents' views of the usefulness of information and support provided by the CM Options service?
- What is the profile of parents using the CM Options service?

## **2.4 Design of the evaluation**

This section outlines the design of the survey and the methodology used.

### **2.4.1 Sampling**

The sample used in this study came from CM Options service contact centre Management Information data. The sample was drawn in six tranches, on a monthly basis, between February and September 2009<sup>4</sup>, to try to ensure that the sample covered a relatively long-running period for the service.

The sample was made up of two groups of parents, 77 per cent of the sample were referred to CM Options from Jobcentre Plus, and the remaining 23 per cent, which came into contact with the service through other routes and are known in the report as the 'General' group<sup>5</sup>. At the time of sampling Jobcentre Plus referrals constituted 80 to 85 per cent of the CM Options telephone service user population. The General group were over-sampled to ensure there were sufficient numbers in the General group to allow sub-group analysis. The sample did not include users of the website or face-to-face service who had not also used the telephone helpline.

### **2.4.2 Conducting the survey**

The interviews were conducted over the telephone with named respondents. Before interviewers contacted parents, they were sent a letter explaining the

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<sup>4</sup> There was no sample drawn in May and June because the period of time between CM Options service contact and sample availability was reduced in order to boost the response rate.

<sup>5</sup> It is possible that some of the General group were also in contact with Jobcentre Plus but declined referral and subsequently contacted CM Options themselves.



survey and allowing them to opt-out by calling a free phone number. Every interviewer attended a face-to-face briefing before beginning work on the survey, which emphasised the need for discretion given the potentially sensitive subject matter. Baseline interviews lasted for 20 minutes on average and Outcomes interviews lasted 14 minutes on average.

The interviews were done in two stages. The first stage (known as the Baseline interviews) were carried out two to four months after contact with the CM Options service and collected a range of information about parents' experiences of the service, as well as collecting demographic and 'separation' information to use in the matching process carried out for the assessment of effect (see Chapter 7). The second stage of interviews (known as the Outcomes interviews) took place six months after the Baseline interview, that is, eight to nine months after contact with CM Options, and collected information about maintenance arrangements that parents had been able to make since contact with the service. Table 2.1 shows the time between the CM Options contact and each of the interview stages for the six tranches of fieldwork. Note that the majority of the interviews were carried out prior to the policy change in April 2010 which allowed parents claiming benefits to keep all of their maintenance and their benefits.

Table 2.1 Time between contact with CM Options and interviews				
Tranche	CM Options call	Baseline interview	Outcomes interview	
1	February 2009	May 2009	November 2009	
2	March 2009	June 2009	January 2010	
3	April 2009	July 2009	February 2010	
4	July 2009 <sup>6</sup>	September 2009	March 2010	
5	August 2009	October 2009	April 2010	
6	September 2009	November 2009	May 2010	

### 2.4.3 Response rates

The final numbers of achieved interviews, per stage, are as follows:

- Baseline: 4454
- Outcomes: 2767

The final response rate at the Baseline stage was 42 per cent of all cases, or 74 per cent of in-scope cases. This is lower than the estimated response rate of 64 per cent. To try to increase the response rate, several actions were taken, which

<sup>6</sup> Note that the time between the CM Options call and the Baseline interview was reduced to try to improve the response rate for tranches four to six of fieldwork. See Appendix B for more information about actions taken to improve response.



affected the last three tranches of the Baseline fieldwork period<sup>7</sup>. These actions are detailed in Appendix B.

The final response rate at the Outcomes stage was 66 per cent of all cases covered, or 91 per cent of in-scope cases. Following the first tranche, it was apparent that the response rate was falling below the estimated 73 per cent and additional actions were taken to boost the response rate, also detailed in Appendix B.

#### **2.4.4 Interpreting results in the report**

Throughout the report, only parents who have been interviewed at both the Baseline and the Outcomes interview, a total maximum base size of 2767, have been included in the analysis. The bases in this report contain the total number of cases in the whole sample who took part in both interviews or in the particular sub-group being analysed and the bases for different columns (e.g. Jobcentre Plus group). Selection and non-response weights were applied to the data (see Appendix B for more information on weighting). Weighted and unweighted bases are given. The total base figure excludes any respondent who said 'don't know' or refused to answer the question, unless 'don't know' or 'refusal' appears as a specific answer category. Thus, while base descriptions may be the same across a number of tables (e.g. all parents who completed an Outcomes interview) the number bases may differ slightly due to the exclusion of varying numbers of 'don't knows' or refusals at different questions. Due to rounding, weighted base totals may not equate exactly to the individual column figures added together. Also due to rounding percentage figures may not add up to exactly 100 per cent.

Some base sizes in this report are relatively small, so it is particularly important to note the unweighted base size when drawing comparisons. Any findings reported in the text have been tested for statistical significance and are significant at the five per cent level, unless otherwise stated.

Subgroup analysis has been carried out for most variables where base sizes allow. This was done consistently across these key sub groups:

- Comparing the two different routes into the CM Options service: Jobcentre Plus and General group.

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<sup>7</sup> There was a concern that a lower than predicted response rate could be problematic for the design of the evaluation, which required similar numbers of both high, and low, level users of the CM Options service, as lower response rates may lead to disproportionate number of users in each group and hence not enough of both groups to be able to compare them. However, when analysed it was clear that the proportions in each user group remained fairly constant across the Baseline and Outcomes stage and thus the lower response rate did not pose a problem for the evaluation design.

- Comparing the proportion of Jobcentre Plus and General group who are claiming Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance (known as 'Jobcentre Plus with benefits' or 'Jobcentre Plus no benefits' or 'General with benefits' or 'General no benefits'). This has been done to identify any differences between benefit claimants and non-benefit claimants, and is split by the Jobcentre Plus and General group also, so that differences between benefit claimants are not conflated with route into the CM Options service.
- Comparing the different 'separation types' of parents. See Chapter 3 for more information on this.
- Comparing parental status, for example, whether the respondent was a parent with care or a non-resident parent.

The symbols below have been used in tables and denote the following:

[ ] to indicate a percentage based on fewer than 50 respondents,

+ to indicate a percentage of less than 0.5 per cent,

0 to indicate a percentage value of zero.

## 2.5 Drawing inferences

**This survey is not a survey of all separated parents as by no means do all separated parents use the CM Options service telephone helpline. It also does not include parents who use the website or the face to face service only. Nor is it a survey of all parents claiming benefits who are eligible for child maintenance, as fewer than half of all new benefit claimants were referred to the CM Options service** (Hansard, 6/9/2010, col. 67-69). The number of non-Jobcentre Plus referrals has increased since this sample was drawn (to around 30 per cent), with the result that the Jobcentre Plus group are now a slightly smaller proportion of the CM Options total client base (around 70 per cent). But a comparison of Management Information data in 2010 suggested that the profile of Jobcentre Plus clients has not changed much over time, and nor has the profile of the General group (see Appendix 0). So there is good reason to believe that the findings presented in this report are broadly applicable to more recent CM Options service clients, though it should be noted that the service has undergone some changes since the survey was carried out.

The study includes a quasi-experimental assessment of the effect of CM Options on maintenance outcomes. Ideally this assessment would have included a non-

CM Options comparison group. However, for a number of reasons this did not prove feasible and instead, we have estimated effect sizes by comparing 'moderate to high' level users with a comparison group derived from a group of very 'low level' users. Furthermore, effect sizes have **only been estimated for Jobcentre Plus clients** as constructing a convincing comparison sample for the other self-referring clients did not prove feasible. A more detailed discussion of this can be found in Chapter 7.

## 2.6 Overview of the report

In addition to this introduction, the report comprises five substantive chapters, and a conclusions chapter.

Chapter 3 examines the demographic profile of parents and their relationship with their ex-partner, as well as giving an overview of the separation types created by latent class analysis which are used throughout the analysis in the report. First the chapter examines background and demographic characteristics such as the age and gender of parents, as well as the number and age of children, working and benefit status, income, ethnicity and disability. This is followed by key characteristics relating to their family situation and relationship history such as marital status prior to separation, length of relationship with their ex-partner, reasons for separation, quality of relationship at the point of separation and at the time of the survey.

How parents used the CM Options service prior to both Baseline and Outcomes interviews are examined in Chapter 4. The main focus is around usage of the telephone service at both stages, including the number and length of calls, topics discussed and signposting and leaflets received. It also reports on parents' likelihood of using the service again and provides an overview of telephone service use. Parents' use of the CM Options service website prior to Baseline and Outcomes interviews is also examined as well as any usage of the face-to face-service.

Chapter 5 looks at parents with maintenance arrangements and the nature of these arrangements. It starts by looking at the proportion of parents with arrangements and then the type and quality of these arrangements. The reasons parents' maintenance arrangements broke down are also examined as is other financial support provided outside of maintenance arrangements.

Chapter 6 reports on those parents who have no maintenance arrangement in place; the reasons for this, and their views on the likelihood of making an arrangement in the future.

Finally Chapter 7 analyses the effect of the CM Options Service. It starts with an analysis of the primary outcome of the study: the effect of the CM Options service on the extent to which parents have been able to make maintenance arrangements or not. It also looks at the secondary outcomes of the CM Options Service: the effect on the type of maintenance arrangements parents have made and whether these arrangements are working or non-working.

## **3 Parents who use the Child Maintenance Options service**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter reports on the profile of users of the Child Maintenance Options service (CM Options service)<sup>8</sup>. The first part of the chapter looks at parents' background characteristics such as gender, age, relationship and household activity status, income, and the number of children the parent has. The chapter then goes on to look at parents' 'separation characteristics' such as whether the parents were previously married or cohabiting, and the level of contact between parents at the time of the survey, and discusses how these were used to develop a typology of 'separation types', which have been used in the rest of the report. Finally, this chapter concludes by investigating parents' background characteristics according to each of these separation types.

### **3.2 The background characteristics of parents who use the CM Options service**

The majority of parents had been referred to the service by Jobcentre Plus (77 per cent). The remaining 23 per cent (the 'General group') had not been referred by Jobcentre Plus, and included parents who had contacted the service themselves and referrals from other government agencies or voluntary and community organisations. At the time the sample was drawn (February to September 2009) between 80 and 85 per cent of parents using the CM Options service were referred by Jobcentre Plus. The General group were over-sampled to ensure that there would be a sufficient number of responses for this group to be able to do subgroup analysis. The data available at the time of writing shows that 70 per cent of current CM Options service users were Jobcentre Plus referrals with the remaining 30 per cent falling into the General category.

The vast majority of parents taking part in the survey were parents with care (93 per cent) which, for the purposes of this study, has been defined as the parent who the child lives with for more than half the time. Of the remaining parents, four per cent were non-resident parents (the parent who the child lives with for less than half the time), and one per cent reported a situation where the child lived with

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<sup>8</sup> All characteristics presented in this chapter are based on information collected at the Baseline stage if it is a stable characteristic (such as ethnicity or gender) or information checked and recollected at the Outcomes stage if it is a characteristic which can change (such as income).

both parents for exactly 50 per cent of the time each: 'shared care'<sup>9</sup>. Due to the small number of parents with shared care of their child, these parents were not included in the analyses of parental status.

### 3.2.1 Gender of respondents

Table 3.1 shows the percentage of male and female users of the CM Options service according to their route into the CM Options service. Although the majority of parents in both groups were female (89 per cent), a slightly greater proportion of the Jobcentre Plus group were female (90 per cent) compared to the General group (84 per cent).

**Table 3.1 Gender of respondents, by route into CM Options**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

Gender	Jobcentre Plus		Route into CM Options		Total
		%	General	%	
Male		10		16	11
Female		90		84	89
Weighted base		2129		637	2766
Unweighted base		1860		906	2766

Table 3.2 presents the proportion of male and female respondents according to their benefit status<sup>10</sup> and route into the CM Options service. Amongst the General group that were not claiming benefits, around two in ten were male (19 per cent) compared with around one in ten of the other groups (eight to 11 per cent).

**Table 3.2 Gender of respondents, by benefit status**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

Gender	Jobcentre Plus		Benefit status		Total
	Plus + benefits	Plus no benefits	General + benefits	General no benefits	
	%	%	%	%	%
Male	11	8	8	19	11
Female	89	92	92	81	89
Weighted base	1275	855	200	437	2766
Unweighted base	1133	727	271	635	2766

<sup>9</sup> For the additional two per cent it was not possible to classify them as parents with care, non-resident parents or as having shared care status.

<sup>10</sup> Benefit status refers to whether the respondent reported receiving a low income benefit at the Baseline interview, that is either Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance. More information on this is given in section 3.2.8 below.

Looking at the gender of respondents according to parental status, the majority of parents with care were female (92 per cent), whilst the majority of non-resident parents were male (87 per cent).

### 3.2.2 Age of respondents

Table 3.3 shows the age of parents at the time of the Outcomes interview. Overall, more than half of parents were aged between 26 and 40 years old (55 per cent). Jobcentre Plus referrals tended to be younger than the General group: a greater proportion of Jobcentre Plus referrals were aged between 20 and 25, and 26 and 30 (17 per cent and 19 per cent respectively), compared to the General group (12 per cent and 14 per cent). In contrast, a greater proportion of the General group were aged between 36 and 40, and 41 and 45 (26 per cent and 20 per cent), compared with Jobcentre Plus referrals (19 per cent and 16 per cent).

**Table 3.3 Age of respondents, by route into CM Options**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

Age of respondent	Jobcentre Plus		Route into CM Options		Total
		%		%	
Under 20		1		1	1
20 to 25		17		12	16
26 to 30		19		14	18
31 to 35		18		16	17
36 to 40		19		26	20
41 to 45		16		20	17
46 to 50		8		8	8
51+		4		4	4
<i>Weighted base</i>		<i>2102</i>		<i>624</i>	<i>2725</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>		<i>1835</i>		<i>893</i>	<i>2728</i>

Table 3.4 shows parents' age according to their benefit status. Overall, it can be seen that parents claiming benefits were typically younger than parents who were not claiming benefits. For example, 20 per cent of Jobcentre Plus parents claiming benefits were aged between 20 and 25 years old, while a similar percentage of the General group who were claiming benefits were of the same age (23 per cent). In contrast, only 12 per cent of Jobcentre Plus referrals not claiming benefits and seven per cent of the General group not claiming benefits were found to be in this age group.

**Table 3.4 Age of respondents, by benefit status***Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

Age of respondent	Benefit status				Total %
	Jobcentre Plus + benefits %	Jobcentre Plus no benefits %	General + benefits %	General no benefits %	
Under 20	1	+	3	1	1
20 to 25	20	12	23	7	16
26 to 30	19	18	19	11	18
31 to 35	18	16	18	15	17
36 to 40	18	20	19	29	20
41 to 45	13	19	10	24	17
46 to 50	8	10	4	9	8
51+	3	5	4	4	4
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1260</i>	<i>841</i>	<i>193</i>	<i>431</i>	<i>2725</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1120</i>	<i>715</i>	<i>265</i>	<i>628</i>	<i>2728</i>

Table 3.5 shows the age of parents by parental status and shows that parents with care were generally younger than non-resident parents. A greater proportion of parents with care were aged between 20 and 25 years old (16 per cent) and 26 and 30 years old (18 per cent) compared with non-resident parents (six per cent and nine per cent respectively). A greater percentage of non-resident parents were aged between 41 and 45 (28 per cent) compared with parents with care (16 per cent).

**Table 3.5 Age of respondents, by parental status***Base: All parents at Outcomes interview<sup>11</sup>*

Age of respondent	Parental status		Total %
	Parent with care %	Non-resident parent %	
Under 20	1	+	1
20 to 25	16	6	16
26 to 30	18	9	18
31 to 35	17	18	17
36 to 40	20	24	20
41 to 45	16	28	17
46 to 50	8	9	8
51+	3	7	4
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>2545</i>	<i>108</i>	<i>2725</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>2510</i>	<i>139</i>	<i>2728</i>

<sup>11</sup> Parents who were classified as having a shared care arrangement (34 cases), or where it was not possible to determine their status (45 cases), have not been presented in this table due to small base sizes, but they have been included in the percentages in the total column.



### 3.2.3 Single and couple households

Parents were asked about their current household status, for example, whether they were a lone parent or were living with a partner. The majority of parents (87 per cent) were found to be lone parents with a substantially smaller proportion living as a couple family (13 per cent). There were no significant differences detected between the Jobcentre Plus and the General group in terms of their household status.

However, there was a difference in the proportion of lone parents and parents who had a co-habiting partner in terms of their benefit status, with lone parents being more likely to be claiming benefits. For example (Table 3.6), amongst parents who had been referred by Jobcentre Plus, 93 per cent of those receiving benefits were lone parents, compared with 78 per cent of those not receiving benefits.

**Table 3.6 Household status, by benefit status**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

Household status	Benefit status				Total
	Jobcentre Plus + benefits	Jobcentre Plus no benefits	General + benefits	General no benefits	
	%	%	%	%	%
Couple family	7	22	7	14	13
Lone parent	93	78	93	86	87
Weighted base	1275	855	200	437	2766
Unweighted base	1133	727	271	635	2766

When considering parents' household status, it was found that parents who were part of a couple household made up a greater proportion of non-resident parents (23 per cent) than parents with care (12 per cent). (Appendix A, Table A.1).

### 3.2.4 Number of children

The majority of CM Options service users were found to have either one (38 per cent) or two (35 per cent) children. Seventeen per cent were found to have three children, six per cent had four children, and three per cent had five or more children (table not presented). No differences were found in the number of children parents had according to their route into the service (Jobcentre Plus or General group), their benefit status or whether they were a parent with care or the non-resident parent.

### 3.2.5 Age of children

Respondents were asked how old each of their children were, and their responses were grouped into the following categories: less than a year to five years of age,

six to 11 years, 12 to 16 years, and 17 to 18 years. Across these categories, no difference was found in the proportion of parents with children of each of these ages according to whether they were Jobcentre Plus referrals or were from the General group (table not presented).

There were, however, differences found in the age of children according to whether the parent was receiving benefits. Table 3.7 shows that parents who were receiving benefits were more likely to have younger children. A relatively larger percentage of parents who were receiving benefits had children aged less than six (64 per cent of the General group who were receiving benefits, compared with 46 per cent of the General group who were not receiving benefits). In contrast, a higher percentage of parents not receiving benefits had children aged between 12 and 16 (39 per cent of the General group who were not receiving benefits, compared with 27 per cent of the General group who were receiving benefits).

**Table 3.7 Age of child, by benefit status**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview<sup>12</sup>*

Age of children	Benefit status				Total
	Jobcentre Plus + benefits	Jobcentre Plus no benefits	General + benefits	General no benefits	
	%	%	%	%	%
At least one child aged 0 to 5	60	48	64	46	55
At least one child aged 6 to 11	47	45	41	48	46
At least one child aged 12 to 16	32	40	27	39	35
At least one child aged 17 to 18	9	12	8	12	11
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1275</i>	<i>855</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>437</i>	<i>2766</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1133</i>	<i>727</i>	<i>271</i>	<i>635</i>	<i>2766</i>

In terms of parental status, parents with care were more likely to report having children less than five years old compared to non-resident parents (55 per cent compared with 41 per cent; Appendix A, Table A.2).

### 3.2.6 Household activity status

Table 3.8 shows parents' household activity status (working or non-working, lone or couple family), according to their route into the CM Options service.

More than half of parents were in a non-working lone parent household (54 per cent). The Jobcentre Plus group were more likely to be in a non-working household than the General group. Parents who were referred by Jobcentre Plus

<sup>12</sup> As respondents could give more than one answer to this question therefore column totals do not add up to 100.

were more likely than the General group to be a couple family where neither adult is working (six per cent compared with two per cent for the General group) or to be non-working lone parents (60 per cent compared with 32 per cent). Meanwhile a greater percentage of the General group than the Jobcentre Plus group were found to be lone working parents (56 per cent compared with 27 per cent).

**Table 3.8 Household activity status, by route into CM Options**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

Household status	Jobcentre Plus		General		Total	
		%		%		%
Couple both working		3		5		3
Couple one working		4		4		4
Couple neither working		6		2		5
Lone working		27		56		34
Lone not working		60		32		54
<i>Weighted base</i>		<i>2127</i>		<i>635</i>		<i>2762</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>		<i>1858</i>		<i>903</i>		<i>2761</i>

Table 3.9 shows household activity status by benefit status. Overall, this table illustrates that parents claiming benefits, unsurprisingly, were less likely to be in a working household. For example, a considerably higher percentage of the Jobcentre Plus group receiving benefits were non-working lone parents (76 per cent) compared to the Jobcentre Plus group not receiving benefits (37 per cent).

**Table 3.9 Household activity status, by benefit status**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

Household status	Benefit status				Total
	Jobcentre Plus + benefits	Jobcentre Plus no benefits	General + benefits	General no benefits	
	%	%	%	%	%
Couple both working	+	6	0	8	3
Couple one working	1	8	3	5	4
Couple neither working	5	7	5	1	5
Lone working	17	42	14	76	34
Lone not working	76	37	79	10	54
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1275</i>	<i>853</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>435</i>	<i>2762</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1133</i>	<i>725</i>	<i>271</i>	<i>632</i>	<i>2761</i>

Table 3.10 shows that non-resident parents were more likely to be in a working household. A greater proportion of non-resident parents than parents with care were part of couples where both were working (12 per cent compared with three

per cent), or were working lone parents (44 per cent compared with 33 per cent). In contrast, a greater proportion of parents with care than non-resident parents were non-working lone parents (55 per cent compared with 32 per cent).

**Table 3.10 Household activity status, by parental status**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview<sup>13</sup>*

Household status	Parental status		Total	%
	Parent with care	Non-resident parent		
	%	%		
Couple both working	3	12		3
Couple one working	4	6		4
Couple neither working	5	6		5
Lone working	33	44		34
Lone not working	55	32		54
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>2580</i>	<i>110</i>		<i>2762</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>2543</i>	<i>139</i>		<i>2761</i>

### 3.2.7 Household income

The majority of CM Options service users (irrespective of route into the service) reported receiving a household income of £20,000 per annum or less (83 per cent of users; Table 3.11). As might be expected, Jobcentre Plus referrals were more likely to report having an income of £20,000 or less per year (87 per cent compared with 72 per cent of the General group), whereas those in the General group were more likely to have an income of £20,001 or greater (28 per cent compared with 13 per cent of Jobcentre Plus referrals)<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Parents who were classified as having a shared care arrangement (34 cases), or where it was not possible to determine their status (45 cases), have not been presented in this table due to small base sizes, but they have been included in the percentages in the total column.

<sup>14</sup> The figures presented in Table 3.11 have been rounded. As such, when added together, the total may be slightly different to what is presented in the text, which is the correct total.

**Table 3.11 Household income, by route into CM Options***Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

Household income	Route into CM Options		Total	%
	Jobcentre Plus	General		
	%	%		
Less than £5,000	8	4	7	
£5,001 to £10,000	35	22	32	
£10,001 to £15,000	27	26	26	
£15,001 to £20,000	17	20	18	
£20,001 to £25,000	6	11	8	
£25,001 to £30,000	3	9	5	
£30,001 to £40,000	2	4	2	
£40,001+	1	4	2	
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1810</i>	<i>554</i>	<i>2365</i>	
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1567</i>	<i>791</i>	<i>2358</i>	

Table 3.12 shows that, again unsurprisingly, those reporting lower incomes were more likely to be receiving benefits. While 39 per cent of the General group not receiving benefits and 22 per cent of the Jobcentre Plus group not receiving benefits were on an income of £20,001 or greater, only seven per cent of the Jobcentre Plus group receiving benefits and three per cent of the General group receiving benefits reported an income of £20,001 or greater. In comparison, a greater proportion of parents who reported receiving benefits reported having an income of £20,000 or less per year (e.g. 96 per cent of the General group receiving benefits compared with 61 per cent who reported not receiving benefits).<sup>15</sup>

**Table 3.12 Household income, by benefit status***Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

Household income	Benefit status				Total
	Jobcentre Plus + benefits	Jobcentre Plus no benefits	General + benefits	General no benefits	
	%	%	%	%	%
Less than £5,000	7	9	5	4	7
£5,001 to £10,000	42	24	39	14	32
£10,001 to £15,000	26	28	39	20	26
£15,001 to £20,000	17	17	13	23	18
£20,001 to £25,000	4	10	2	15	8
£25,001 to £30,000	2	6	1	12	5
£30,001 to £40,000	1	4	+	6	2
£40,001+	1	2	+	5	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1098</i>	<i>712</i>	<i>171</i>	<i>383</i>	<i>2364</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>968</i>	<i>599</i>	<i>232</i>	<i>559</i>	<i>2358</i>

<sup>15</sup> The figures presented in Table 3.12 have been rounded. As such, when added together, the total may be slightly different to what is presented in the text, which is the correct total.

In Table 3.13 it can be seen that parents with care reported a lower level of income compared with non-resident parents. The majority (85 per cent) of parents with care reported an income of £20,000 or less per year, compared with only 62 per cent of non-resident parents.

**Table 3.13 Household income, by parental status**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview<sup>16</sup>*

Household income	Parental status		Total
	Parent with care	Non-resident parent	
	%	%	%
Less than £5,000	7	8	7
£5,001 to £10,000	33	15	32
£10,001 to £15,000	27	23	26
£15,001 to £20,000	18	16	18
£20,001 to £25,000	7	14	8
£25,001 to £30,000	4	12	5
£30,001 to £40,000	2	7	2
£40,001+	2	6	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>2216</i>	<i>88</i>	<i>2364</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>2171</i>	<i>119</i>	<i>2358</i>

### 3.2.8 Benefit status

More than half of all parents claimed low income benefits: either Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance (53 per cent)<sup>17</sup>. As might be expected, a greater proportion of respondents who had been referred to the CM Options service by Jobcentre Plus were receiving a low income benefit compared with those who had come into contact with the CM Options service by other means. While 60 per cent of Jobcentre Plus referrals were receiving low income benefits, only 31 per cent of those in the General group reported receiving them (Appendix A, Table A.3).

Whilst it might initially seem surprising that not all of the Jobcentre Plus group were claiming benefits at the time of the Baseline interview, it is worth remembering that this group were referred to the CM Options service after putting in a claim for a low income benefit. As such, the 40 per cent of Jobcentre Plus respondents not claiming benefit could be those whose benefit claim was rejected, or those whose benefit status had changed by the time of the Baseline interview (approximately two to three months after the CM Options call).

<sup>16</sup> Parents who were classified as having a shared care arrangement (29 cases), or where it was not possible to determine their status (39 cases), have not been presented in this table due to small base sizes, but they have been included in the percentages in the total column.

<sup>17</sup> Benefit status is calculated by looking at whether the respondent stated they were claiming either Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance at the Baseline interview.

When looking at parental status, it was found that a larger percentage of parents with care claimed benefits (55 per cent) than non-resident parents (28 per cent).

### 3.2.9 Ethnicity of respondents

The majority of CM Options service users were of White ethnic origin (85 per cent in total), and made up a slightly higher percentage of those in the General group than Jobcentre Plus referrals (88 per cent compared with 84 per cent; Table 3.14). Black or Black British respondents were the next most commonly reported ethnic group, making up a higher percentage of Jobcentre Plus referrals than those in the General group (nine per cent compared with six per cent).

**Table 3.14 Respondent ethnicity, by route into CM Options**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

Ethnicity	Route into CM Options		Total
	Jobcentre Plus	General	
	%	%	%
White	84	88	85
Black or Black British	9	6	8
Mixed	2	2	2
Asian or Asian British	3	3	3
Chinese	+	0	+
Other ethnic group	2	1	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>2128</i>	<i>637</i>	<i>2764</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1858</i>	<i>906</i>	<i>2764</i>

No differences were found in the ethnic make-up of CM Options service users according to their benefit status or their parental status.

## 3.3 Separation characteristics of parents

The following section will explore parents' characteristics related to separation and relationship breakdown, such as the nature and length of separation, and their ability to discuss financial matters following separation.

### 3.3.1 Relationship status of respondent and ex-partner

Prior to break-up, the majority of parents reported either having been married or in a civil partnership (42 per cent), or having lived together as a couple with their ex-partner (42 per cent; Table 3.15). There were small differences between the General group and Jobcentre Plus referrals. For example, nearly half of those in the General group (49 per cent) had been married or in a civil partnership prior to break-up compared with 39 per cent of Jobcentre Plus referrals.

**Table 3.15 Relationship status of respondent and ex-partner, by route into CM Options***Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

Relationship status	Route into CM Options		Total	
	Jobcentre Plus	General		
	%	%		%
Married/Civil Partnership	39	49	42	
Couple - living together	43	38	42	
Couple - not living together	11	9	11	
Not a couple	7	4	6	
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>2128</i>	<i>636</i>	<i>2764</i>	
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1858</i>	<i>905</i>	<i>2763</i>	

In Table 3.16, it can be seen that a higher proportion of parents not receiving benefits had been married or in a civil partnership with their ex-partner (46 per cent of those referred by Jobcentre Plus and 57 per cent of the General group). In contrast, a higher proportion of parents receiving benefits had been in a co-habiting relationship with their ex-partner (46 per cent of Jobcentre Plus referrals and 45 per cent from the General group).

**Table 3.16 Relationship status of respondent and ex-partner, by benefit status***Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

Relationship status	Benefit status				Total
	Jobcentre Plus + benefits	Jobcentre Plus no benefits	General + benefits	General no benefits	
	%	%	%	%	%
Married/Civil Partnership	35	46	32	57	42
Couple - living together	46	38	45	35	42
Couple - not living together	12	11	15	6	11
Not a couple	7	6	8	2	6
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1274</i>	<i>854</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>437</i>	<i>2764</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1132</i>	<i>726</i>	<i>271</i>	<i>634</i>	<i>2763</i>

As shown in Table 3.17, non-resident parents were more likely to have been married or in a civil partnership with their ex-partner than parents with care (55 per cent compared with 41 per cent).



**Table 3.17 Relationship status of respondent and ex-partner, by parental status***Base: All parents at Outcomes interview<sup>18</sup>*

Relationship status	Parental status		Total	%
	Parent with care	Non-resident parent		
	%	%		
Married/Civil Partnership	41	55		42
Couple -living together	42	33		42
Couple - not living together	11	10		11
Not a couple	6	1		6
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>2582</i>	<i>110</i>		<i>2764</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>2544</i>	<i>140</i>		<i>2763</i>

### 3.3.2 Level of contact between non-resident parent and child

Two-thirds of parents reported that the non-resident parent in their family had some sort of contact with the reference child (67 per cent). There was no difference seen between CM Options service users referred by Jobcentre Plus and the General group. However, there was a small difference according to the benefit status of the parent. Parents in the General group who reported not receiving any benefits were more likely to report that the non-resident parent had contact with the child (73 per cent) than parents in any of the other groups (61 to 67 per cent; Appendix A, Table A.4).

When looking at the level of reported contact between the non-resident parent and child, differences were seen according to parental status. Eight in ten of the non-resident parents (82 per cent) reported having contact with their child; in contrast, only two-thirds of parents with care (66 per cent) reported that the non-resident parent and child had contact.

Table 3.18 shows the type and frequency of contact between the non-resident parent and the child. Overall, 62 per cent of parents reported face-to-face contact between the non-resident parent and the child, with only four per cent stating there was only non face-to-face contact (such as telephone contact or emails). The most commonly reported type of contact was face-to-face contact at least once a week, reported by 38 per cent of parents.

Looking at the type of contact between the non-resident parent and child, differences were not seen by route into CM Options. When looking at parental

<sup>18</sup> Parents who were classified as having a shared care arrangement (34 cases), or where it was not possible to determine their status (45 cases), have not been presented in this table due to small base sizes, but they have been included in the percentages in the total column.

status, however, 59 per cent of non-resident parents reported face-to-face contact once a week, only 37 per cent of parents with care reported this type of contact (Table 3.18).

**Table 3.18 Type of contact between NRP and child, by parental status**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview<sup>19</sup>*

Type of contact	Parental status		Total	%
	Parent with care	Non-resident parent		
	%	%		%
Face-to-face contact once a week	37	59		38
Face-to-face contact once/twice a month	18	21		17
Face-to-face contact a few times a year	8	1		7
Non face-to-face contact	4	2		4
No contact	34	18		34
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>2533</i>	<i>107</i>		<i>2709</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>2503</i>	<i>135</i>		<i>2715</i>

### 3.3.3 Length of separation

The mean length of separation was four years and three months. It was found that the General group had been separated from their ex-partner for a longer length of time on average than Jobcentre Plus referrals (mean length of separation was four years six months for the General group, compared with three years six months for Jobcentre Plus). There was, however, a similar range, with the minimum length of separation for both groups being less than a month, and the maximum being twenty-two years five months.

When considering the benefit status of parents, it was seen that those parents not claiming benefit tended to have been separated for longer than those who were.

The Jobcentre Plus group not claiming benefits had been separated for a mean time of five years six months; whereas the Jobcentre Plus group claiming benefits had a mean separation time of three years nine months. The General group not claiming benefit had been separated for a mean time of three years eight months; whereas the General group claiming benefits had been separated for a mean time of three years.

<sup>19</sup> Parents who were classified as having a shared care arrangement (34 cases), or where it was not possible to determine their status (43 cases), have not been presented in this table due to small base sizes, but they have been included in the percentages in the total column.

This may be linked to the fact that parents claiming benefits tended to be younger than those not claiming benefits as was seen in section 3.2.2.

No difference was found in terms of the mean length of separation between parents with care and non-resident parents.

### 3.3.4 Quality of current relationship with ex-partner

This section looks at the quality of the relationship that the respondent had with their ex-partner at the time of the interview. Parents were asked at the Baseline interview to rate their relationship with their ex-partner as 'very friendly', 'quite friendly', 'neither friendly nor unfriendly', 'not very friendly' or 'not at all friendly'. Overall, the majority of parents reported that their relationship with their ex-partner at the time of the interview was neutral or friendly with 37 per cent saying 'quite friendly' and 36 per cent saying 'neither friendly nor unfriendly'.

Parents who had been referred to the CM Options service by Jobcentre Plus were more likely to report a better quality of relationship with their ex-partner than the General group (Table 3.19). Half of Jobcentre Plus parents reported that their relationship was 'quite friendly' (39 per cent) or 'very friendly' (11 per cent), compared to around a third of the General group (30 per cent and four per cent respectively). In comparison, a quarter of the General group parents reported that the relationship was 'not very friendly' (12 per cent) or 'not at all friendly' (14 per cent), compared with around one in seven Jobcentre Plus referrals (six and nine per cent respectively).

**Table 3.19 Quality of relationship with ex-partner, by route into CM Options**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview who retained contact with ex-partner*

Quality of relationship	Route into CM Options		Total
	Jobcentre Plus	General	
	%	%	%
Very friendly	11	4	10
Quite friendly	39	30	37
Neither friendly nor unfriendly	35	39	36
Not very friendly	6	12	7
Not at all friendly	9	14	10
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1131</i>	<i>360</i>	<i>1490</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>987</i>	<i>538</i>	<i>1525</i>

Table 3.20 shows that the General group not claiming benefits were less likely to have a friendly relationship with their ex-partner at the time of the interview than each of the other groups. For example, of the General group not receiving

benefits, 15 per cent reported that their relationship was ‘not at all friendly’ compared with between nine per cent and 12 per cent of the remaining groups.

**Table 3.20 Quality of relationship with ex-partner, by benefit status**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview who retained contact with ex-partner*

Quality of relationship	Benefit status				Total
	Jobcentre Plus + benefits	Jobcentre Plus no benefits	General + benefits	General no benefits	
	%	%	%	%	%
Very friendly	11	12	6	3	10
Quite friendly	40	37	37	28	37
Neither friendly nor unfriendly	35	35	37	40	36
Not very friendly	5	7	8	14	7
Not at all friendly	9	9	12	15	10
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>690</i>	<i>441</i>	<i>110</i>	<i>249</i>	<i>1490</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>613</i>	<i>374</i>	<i>147</i>	<i>391</i>	<i>1525</i>

In terms of the current quality of the relationship between the respondent and their ex-partner, there was very little difference seen between parents with care and non-resident parents. The only exception was in terms of the proportion who reported that their current relationship was ‘not very friendly’, with a greater percentage of the parents with care reporting this than non-resident parents (eight per cent compared with four per cent).

### 3.3.5 Nature of separation

Parents were asked about the nature of the separation from their ex-partner, in terms of whether it had been ‘very bitter’, ‘quite bitter’, ‘neither bitter nor friendly’, ‘quite friendly’ or ‘very friendly’. Given the difficulties that are often present at the point of break-up, it is not surprising that the majority of respondents stated that the separation had been ‘quite bitter’ (25 per cent) or ‘very bitter’ (41 per cent; Table 3.21).

The General group were more likely to have had an acrimonious separation compared to the Jobcentre Plus group (Table 3.21). A greater percentage of the General group reported that the separation from their ex-partner had been ‘very bitter’ (46 per cent compared with 39 per cent of Jobcentre Plus referrals).

**Table 3.21 Nature of separation, by route into CM Options**

Base: All parents at Outcomes interview who were in a relationship with their ex-partner

Nature of separation	Route into CM Options		Total	
	Jobcentre Plus	General		
	%	%		%
Very bitter	39	46		41
Quite bitter	25	25		25
Neither bitter nor friendly	25	19		23
Quite friendly	10	9		9
Very friendly	2	1		2
Weighted base	1975	611		2586
Unweighted base	1740	875		2615

In terms of the quality of the separation by benefit status, there was some evidence that Jobcentre Plus parents receiving benefits were less likely to have experienced an acrimonious separation than other groups (Table 3.22). For example, 37 per cent of parents in this group reported that the separation was 'very bitter' compared with between 42 per cent of the Jobcentre Plus group not receiving benefits, 50 per cent of the General group receiving benefits and 45 per cent of the General group not receiving benefits.

**Table 3.22 Nature of separation, by benefit status**

Base: All parents at Outcomes interview who were in a relationship with their ex-partner

Nature of separation	Benefit status				Total
	Jobcentre Plus + benefits	Jobcentre Plus no benefits	General + benefits	General no benefits	
	%	%	%	%	%
Very bitter	37	42	50	45	40
Quite bitter	24	27	24	25	25
Neither bitter nor friendly	26	22	20	19	23
Quite friendly	11	7	6	10	9
Very friendly	2	2	+	1	2
Weighted base	1177	799	184	427	2586
Unweighted base	1054	686	253	622	2615

Few differences were apparent in the nature of the parents' separation with their ex-partner according to whether they were the parent with care or the non-resident parent. The only difference was that a greater percentage of non-resident parents than parents with care reported that the separation had been 'quite friendly' (18 per cent compared with nine per cent).

### 3.3.6 Ability to discuss financial matters

Parents were asked whether they discussed financial matters with their ex-partner and how difficult they found it or would find it to discuss such matters. A greater proportion of parents in the General group discussed financial matters with their ex-partner (44 per cent) compared to the Jobcentre Plus group (36 per cent) <sup>20</sup>. However, Table 3.23 shows that the General group were also more likely to find discussing such matters difficult (29 per cent compared with 15 per cent of parents referred by Jobcentre Plus).

**Table 3.23 Ability to discuss financial matters, by route into CM Options**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

Discussion of financial matters	Route into CM Options		Total
	Jobcentre Plus	General	
	%	%	%
Discusses and finds it easy	10	9	10
Discusses and finds it difficult	15	29	18
Discusses and finds it neither easy/difficult	10	6	9
Never discusses but would find it easy	17	9	15
Never discusses but would find it difficult	48	47	47
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>2091</i>	<i>630</i>	<i>2720</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1831</i>	<i>897</i>	<i>2728</i>

Looking at discussion of financial matters by benefit status reveals that the difference between the Jobcentre Plus group and the General group can be explained by a difference between parents in the General group not receiving benefits compared to each of the other groups. For example, nearly half of the General group not receiving benefits reported discussing financial matters with their ex-partner (47 per cent), compared to about a third of parents in each of the other groups (34 to 37 per cent) <sup>21</sup>. As Table 3.24 shows, a greater proportion of the General group not receiving benefits reported discussing such matters and finding it difficult (34 per cent), compared with 14 to 19 per cent of parents in each of the other groups.

<sup>20</sup> The figures presented in Table 3.23 have been rounded. As such, when added together, the total may be slightly different to what is presented in the text, which is the correct total.

<sup>21</sup> The figures presented in Table 3.24 have been rounded. As such, when added together, the total may be slightly different to what is presented in the text, which is the correct total.

**Table 3.24 Ability to discuss financial matters, by benefit status***Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

	Benefit status				Total
	Jobcentre Plus + benefits	Jobcentre Plus no benefits	General + benefits	General no benefits	
Discussion of financial matters	%	%	%	%	%
Discusses and finds it easy	11	9	9	8	10
Discusses and finds it difficult	14	17	19	34	18
Discusses and finds it neither easy/difficult	11	9	9	5	9
Never discusses but would find it easy	19	13	13	8	15
Never discusses but would find it difficult	44	53	50	45	47
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1248</i>	<i>843</i>	<i>197</i>	<i>433</i>	<i>2720</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1114</i>	<i>717</i>	<i>267</i>	<i>630</i>	<i>2728</i>

Non-resident parents were more likely to report that they had discussed financial matters with their ex-partner compared to parents with care (e.g. 55 per cent of non-resident partners compared with 37 per cent of parents with care)<sup>22</sup>. As Table 3.25 shows, 48 per cent of parents with care reported never discussing financial matters and that they would find it difficult to do so, compared with 29 per cent of non-resident parents.

**Table 3.25 Ability to discuss financial matters, by parental status***Base: All parents at Outcomes interview<sup>23</sup>*

	Parental status		Total
	Parent with care	Non-resident parent	
Discussion of financial matters	%	%	%
Discusses and finds it easy	10	19	10
Discusses and finds it difficult	18	27	18
Discusses and finds it neither easy/difficult	9	8	9
Never discusses but would find it easy	15	16	15
Never discusses but would find it difficult	48	29	47
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>2545</i>	<i>108</i>	<i>2720</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>2514</i>	<i>138</i>	<i>2728</i>

<sup>22</sup> The figures presented in Table 3.24 have been rounded. As such, when added together, the total may be slightly different to what is presented in the text, which is the correct total.

<sup>23</sup> Parents who were classified as having a shared care arrangement (33 cases), or where it was not possible to determine their status (43 cases), have not been presented in this table due to small base sizes, but they have been included in the percentages in the total column.

### 3.3.7 Separation types

In this section, respondent characteristics for each of the five clusters of separation types are presented. These clusters were identified using latent class analysis, a statistical method that identifies subgroups or clusters within data where members of a cluster are relatively homogenous. The analysis was carried out in order to identify groups of parents who had a similar experience of separation. Variables that were used in this analysis included the length of separation, the nature of the separation from their ex-partner and the level of contact parents had with their ex-partner, and the level of contact between the non-resident parent and the child at the time of interview. While more information can be found in Appendix B of this report (together with a brief methodological explanation), the five clusters are described below:

- Cluster 1 **‘Long-term, bitter’**: Most of these parents had been separated from their ex-partner for a long period of time and also had a very bitter break-up. Parents in this group were unlikely to have any contact with their ex-partner and the majority stated there was no contact between the non-resident parent and the child. They mainly did not discuss financial matters with their ex-partner, and thought that doing so would be difficult. This is the largest group, comprising 41 per cent of all parents.
- Cluster 2 **‘Medium-term, contact’**: These parents tended to have been separated for a medium length of time and have a mix of experiences in terms of how bitter their separation was. There was also a range of circumstances when looking at how often the parent sees their ex-partner; however they all report some level of contact and contact between the non-resident parent and the child. They tended to discuss financial matters with their ex-partners but reported that this was difficult. This group comprised 21 per cent of all parents.
- Cluster 3 **‘Recent, friendly, contact’**: This group of parents were on the whole more recently separated from their ex-partner and reported that the break-up was quite friendly. They also reported a good current relationship with their ex-partner with regular contact between ex-partners and the non-resident parent and the child. They tended to discuss financial matters with their ex-partner and found this easy. This group comprised 16 per cent of all parents.
- Cluster 4 **‘Recent, mixed, contact’**: This group of parents tended to be more recently separated from their ex-partner and reported a range of experiences in terms of how bitter the break-up was. They were likely to



report that their current relationship with their ex-partner was neither friendly nor unfriendly. There were high levels of contact between the ex-partners and the non-resident parent and the child. They were likely to discuss financial matters with their ex-partner but found this difficult. This group was 18 per cent of all parents.

- **Cluster 5 ‘Never in a relationship’:** This group are characterised by not having been in a relationship with the other parent when the child was conceived. Also there is very little contact between parents, or between non-resident parent and child. This is the smallest group comprising just four per cent of all parents.

The rest of the chapter examines the characteristics of these groups in more depth.

Whilst the majority of all groups were women, there was a difference in the proportion of men and women in each cluster (Table 3.26). There was a relatively lower proportion of men in the ‘long-term, bitter’ group (nine per cent) and the ‘never in a relationship’ group (seven per cent). In contrast, higher proportions of men were found in the ‘medium-term, contact’ (13 per cent), ‘recent, friendly, contact’ (13 per cent) and ‘recent, mixed, contact’ groups (16 per cent).

**Table 3.26 Separation types, by gender**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

Gender	Separation type					Total %
	Long-term, bitter	Medium- term, contact	Recent, friendly, contact	Recent, mixed, contact	Never in a relationship	
	%	%	%	%	%	
Male	9	13	13	16	7	11
Female	91	87	87	84	93	89
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1134</i>	<i>595</i>	<i>458</i>	<i>441</i>	<i>137</i>	<i>2766</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1124</i>	<i>592</i>	<i>448</i>	<i>490</i>	<i>112</i>	<i>2766</i>

In Table 3.27 it can be seen that some ethnic groups constituted a relatively larger proportion of the clusters, although White parents overall made up the majority of parents in all groups. Compared with the other groups, White parents made up a relatively smaller proportion of the ‘never in a relationship’ group (61 per cent compared with 82 to 91 per cent). In comparison, Black or Black British parents made up a larger proportion of the ‘never in a relationship’ group compared with each of the other clusters (33 per cent compared with three to eight per cent).

Asian or Asian British were found to constitute a larger proportion of the 'long-term, bitter' group than other clusters (five per cent compared with one to two per cent).

**Table 3.27 Separation types, by ethnicity**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

Ethnic group	Separation type					Total
	Long-term, bitter	Medium-term, contact	Recent, friendly, contact	Recent, mixed, contact	Never in a relationship	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
White	82	86	89	91	61	85
Mixed	3	3	1	2	2	2
Asian or Asian British	5	2	1	2	1	3
Black or Black British	8	8	7	3	33	8
Chinese	+	+	0	+	0	+
Other ethnic group	2	2	2	1	3	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1133</i>	<i>595</i>	<i>458</i>	<i>441</i>	<i>137</i>	<i>2764</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1122</i>	<i>592</i>	<i>448</i>	<i>490</i>	<i>112</i>	<i>2764</i>

There was no clear pattern when looking at the age of respondents by separation type. The table is shown in Appendix A (Table A.5) for information.

The parents in the 'long-term, bitter' group had more children on average than the 'recent, friendly, contact' and the 'never in a relationship' groups. In Table 3.28 it can be seen that a larger proportion of parents in the 'recent, friendly, contact' group and the 'never in a relationship' group (44 per cent and 58 per cent) had one child whereas the 'long-term, bitter' group had a lower proportion of parents with only one child (33 per cent). The 'long-term, bitter' group was also found to have a relatively high percentage of parents with three children (19 per cent).

**Table 3.28 Separation types, by number of children**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

Number of children	Separation type					Total
	Long-term, bitter	Medium-term, contact	Recent, friendly, contact	Recent, mixed, contact	Never in a relationship	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
1 child	33	38	44	39	58	38
2 children	36	36	35	39	21	35
3 children	19	18	13	15	11	17
4 children	8	6	6	4	4	6
5 or more children	5	2	2	3	6	3
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1134</i>	<i>595</i>	<i>458</i>	<i>441</i>	<i>137</i>	<i>2766</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1124</i>	<i>592</i>	<i>448</i>	<i>490</i>	<i>112</i>	<i>2766</i>

The clusters were found to differ in terms of the age of parents' children. As shown in Table 3.29, in general, the 'long-term, bitter' group tended to have older children with a greater proportion of parents with children aged 17 to 18 (14 per cent) and 12 to 16 (45 per cent). The 'recent, friendly, contact' group had the largest percentage of parents with younger children (77 per cent had children aged less than five).

**Table 3.29 Separation types, by child age**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

Age of children <sup>24</sup>	Separation type					Total
	Long-term, bitter	Medium-term, contact	Recent, friendly, contact	Recent, mixed, contact	Never in a relationship	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
At least one child aged 0 to 5	45	54	77	58	51	55
At least one child aged 6 to 11	47	50	35	51	37	46
At least one child aged 12 to 16	45	34	20	28	35	35
At least one child aged 17 to 18	14	10	7	5	7	11
Weighted base	1134	595	458	441	137	2766
Unweighted base	1124	592	448	490	112	2766

As shown in Table 3.30 the groups of parents that had been separated for longer the 'long-term, bitter' group and 'medium-term, contact' group were more likely to have re-partnered, with a relatively higher proportion of parents in couple families (16 per cent and 15 per cent respectively) compared to each of the other clusters (seven to eight per cent).

**Table 3.30 Separation types, by household relationship status**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

Household status	Separation type					Total
	Long-term, bitter	Medium-term, contact	Recent, friendly, contact	Recent, mixed, contact	Never in a relationship	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Couple family	16	15	7	7	8	13
Lone parent	84	85	93	93	92	87
Weighted base	1134	595	458	441	137	2766
Unweighted base	1124	592	448	490	112	2766

Amongst lone parents (Table 3.31), a relatively greater proportion of parents in the 'recent, friendly, contact' and the 'never in a relationship' groups were non-working lone parents (64 per cent and 69 per cent compared with 47 to 53 per cent of

<sup>24</sup> Respondents could give more than one answer to this question therefore column totals do not add up to 100.

parents in other groups), whereas higher proportions of parents in the 'medium-term, contact' and 'recent, mixed, contact' groups were lone working parents (38 per cent and 43 per cent compared with 24 to 31 per cent of parents in other groups). Greater proportions of parents in the 'long-term, bitter' and the 'medium-term, contact' groups were part of a couple where one was working (five per cent and six per cent compared with one to three per cent of parents in other groups).

**Table 3.31 Separation types, by household working status**

Base: All parents at Outcomes interview

Household working status	Separation type					Total
	Long-term, bitter	Medium-term, contact	Recent, friendly, contact	Recent, mixed, contact	Never in a relationship	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Couple both working	4	5	2	2	2	3
Couple one working	5	6	1	2	3	4
Couple neither working	8	5	4	2	2	5
Lone working	31	38	30	43	24	34
Lone not working	53	47	64	50	69	54
Weighted base	1133	594	457	441	137	2762
Unweighted base	1122	591	447	489	112	2761

Table 3.32 shows how route into the CM Options service varied by the separation type of the parent:

- The 'recent, friendly, contact' group and the 'never in a relationship' group had higher proportions of Jobcentre Plus referrals compared to the other groups (81 per cent and 86 per cent respectively, compared to between 71 and 77 per cent for the other groups).
- The 'recent, mixed, contact' group had a higher proportion of the General group (29 per cent) compared to the other clusters of parents (14 to 24 per cent).

**Table 3.32 Separation types, by route into CM Options**

Base: All parents at Outcomes interview

Route into CM Options	Separation type					Total
	Long-term, bitter	Medium-term, contact	Recent, friendly, contact	Recent, mixed, contact	Never in a relationship	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Jobcentre Plus	77	76	81	71	86	77
General group	23	24	19	29	14	23
Weighted base	1134	595	458	441	137	2766
Unweighted base	1124	592	448	490	112	2766

In Table 3.33 it can be seen that the ‘recent, friendly, contact’ and ‘never in a relationship’ groups were more likely to have parents receiving a low income benefit (65 per cent for each), whereas the ‘medium-term, contact’ group had a relatively lower percentage (45 per cent).

**Table 3.33 Separation types, by low income benefit status**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

Benefit status	Separation type					Total
	Long-term, bitter	Medium-term, contact	Recent, friendly, contact	Recent, mixed, contact	Never in a relationship	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Claims a low income benefit	52	45	65	52	65	53
Does not claim a low income benefit	48	55	35	48	35	47
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1134</i>	<i>595</i>	<i>458</i>	<i>441</i>	<i>137</i>	<i>2766</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1124</i>	<i>592</i>	<i>448</i>	<i>490</i>	<i>112</i>	<i>2766</i>

In terms of income, it was found that there was slight variation among the various clusters (Table 3.34):

- Those in the ‘recent, mixed, contact’ group were more likely to have a higher household income with a greater proportion having an income of between £25,001 and £40,000 (12 per cent compared with one to nine<sup>25</sup> per cent for the other clusters).
- Those in the ‘never in a relationship’ group tended to have slightly lower incomes with 40 per cent having an income of between £5,001 and £10,000 compared to 25 to 34 per cent of parents in each of the other groups.

<sup>25</sup> The figures presented in Table 3.34 have been rounded. As such, when added together, the total may be slightly different to what is presented in the text, which is the correct total.

**Table 3.34 Separation types, by household income***Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

Household income	Separation type					Total
	Long-term, bitter	Medium-term, contact	Recent, friendly, contact	Recent, mixed, contact	Never in a relationship	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Less than £5,000	7	7	7	5	14	7
£5,001 to £10,000	33	25	34	32	40	32
£10,001 to £15,000	26	29	26	24	27	26
£15,001 to £20,000	18	19	22	16	15	18
£20,001 to £25,000	8	8	5	9	2	8
£25,001 to £30,000	3	6	4	8	1	5
£30,001 to £40,000	3	3	+	4	0	2
£40,001+	2	2	1	2	1	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	970	509	387	380	118	2364
<i>Unweighted base</i>	956	504	375	428	95	2358

### 3.4 Summary

- The majority of parents were referred to the CM Options service by Jobcentre Plus (77 per cent). The remaining 23 per cent came into contact with the CM Options service another way, and are known for the rest of the report as the 'General group'.
- Most parents were parents with care (93 per cent) with four per cent being non-resident parents; the remaining respondents reported having shared care or could not be categorised by parental status. The majority of parents were female (89 per cent).
- More than half of respondents (55 per cent) were aged between 26 and 40 years old.
- Most parents had one (38 per cent) or two (35 per cent) children. Around half had a child aged less than five years old (55 per cent), and a similar proportion had a child aged between six and 11 years old (46 per cent).
- Most parents were lone parents (87 per cent), and more than half of parents were in lone non-working households (54 per cent).
- The majority of respondents had a household income of £20,000 or less (83 per cent) and more than half of all parents (53 per cent) were claiming a low income benefit.
- The most commonly reported ethnic group was White (85 per cent), with Black or Black British being the next most commonly reported (8 per cent).
- Two-fifths of parents were previously married or in a civil partnership (42 per cent) with their ex-partner, and the same proportion had been a

cohabiting couple (42 per cent). Only six per cent of parents had not been in a relationship with the other parent of the child.

- The majority of respondents reported that their separation from their ex-partner had been acrimonious, with 25 per cent reporting it was quite bitter and 41 per cent very bitter.
- The mean length of separation was four years three months.
- Two-thirds of parents reported that the non-resident parent and child had some contact at the time of the Baseline interview (67 per cent).
- Most parents had a friendly to neutral relationship with their ex-partner at the time of the Baseline interview, 37 per cent said their relationship was quite friendly and 36 per cent said it was neither friendly nor unfriendly.
- Over a third of parents said they did discuss financial matters with their ex-partner (37 per cent).

Non-resident parents emerged as distinct from parents with care being more likely to have certain demographic and relationship characteristics:

- Non-resident parents were more likely to be male (87 per cent compared to eight per cent of parents with care), older (28 per cent were aged 41 to 45 years compared to 16 per cent of parents with care) and have a resident partner (23 per cent compared to 12 per cent of parents with care). They also tended to be more financially secure being more likely to have a higher income (62 per cent had an income of £20,000 per annum or less compared to 85 per cent of parents with care), live in working households (12 per cent lived in dual working households compared to three per cent of parents with care) and not be claiming low income benefits (28 per cent claiming benefits compared to 55 per cent of parents with care).
- They also reported that they were more likely to have contact with their child (82 per cent compared to 66 per cent of parents with care) and to be able to discuss financial matters with their ex-partner (55 per cent compared to 37 per cent of parents with care).

Latent class analysis was used to group parents who had similar separation characteristics. The following clusters of parents were apparent:

- The **'long-term, bitter' group** had been separated from their ex-partner for a longer time than the other groups, they were more likely to have had a bitter separation and little or no contact between the parents or the non-resident parent and the child was maintained. They were also less likely to be male, more likely to have more and older children, more likely to be older themselves, more likely to belong to an Asian ethnic group (although the majority were White) and to have re-partnered compared to some other groups.

- The **‘medium-term, contact’ group** had been separated for a moderate amount of time compared to the other groups. There was a range of acrimony in terms of the separation, and friendliness in terms of the current relationship with their ex-partner. They were likely to have some, less frequent contact between the parents and the non-resident parent and child. They were also more likely to have re-partnered, compared to some other groups. In terms of ethnicity, number and age of children and income and benefit status they were not very distinct from the other groups.
- The **‘recent, friendly, contact’ group** were more recently separated and were more likely to have a friendly relationship with their ex-partner. There was also regular contact between parents and the child and ex-partner. This group tended to have fewer and younger children compared to other groups, there was a higher proportion of lone parents, and benefit claimants. In terms of ethnicity there was no clear difference between this group and the others.
- The **‘recent, mixed, contact’ group** were also recently separated, and had a neutral to bitter separation. There was also regular contact between parents and the child and ex-partner. This group also had a greater proportion of male parents (though the majority were female) and lone parents compared to some other groups. This group had the highest proportion of White respondents and the lowest proportion of benefit claimants. There were no clear differences in terms of the number and age of children in this group compared to the other groups.
- The **‘never in a relationship’ group** were not in a relationship with the other parent of the child when the child was conceived. Very little contact between parents or between the non-resident parent and child was maintained. This group tended to have fewer children and was more likely to be Black or Black British than the other groups (although the majority were White). They were more likely to be female and benefit claimants, and tended to have a lower income compared to the other groups. There was no clear difference in the age of the child compared to other groups.



## **4 How parents use the Child Maintenance Options service**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter looks at how parents used the Child Maintenance Options service (CM Options service), both at the point of their initial contact with it, reported at the Baseline interview, and any further contact they had in the six-month period between the Baseline and Outcomes interviews. The chapter begins by examining the nature of the telephone contact parents had with the CM Options service at both the Baseline and Outcomes stage including: analysis of call length, number of calls, which topics were discussed and whether the parents were signposted by or received leaflets from the CM Options service. This is followed by a summary of the way in which parents used the CM Options telephone service overall, how helpful parents found the CM Options service and also the likelihood of parents using it again. Although the main focus of the chapter is on the use of the CM Options telephone service from which the sample was drawn, the chapter ends with an examination of use of the CM Options website and the face-to-face service.

### **4.2 Use of the CM Options service: at Baseline**

This section examines the nature of the use of the CM Options service by parents, as reported at the Baseline interview, which occurred two to four months after the initial CM Options service contact. Although all the parents in the sample were recorded by the CM Options service contact centre Management Information system as having been in contact with the CM Options service, there was a proportion of parents (13 per cent) who could not remember this contact. As such, they were not asked the questions about the nature of their CM Options service contact and thus are not reported in this section.

#### **4.2.1 Call origin**

Contact with the CM Options service was either initiated by the parent calling the service themselves (inbound calls) or the CM Options service contacting the parent (outbound calls). All of the Jobcentre Plus group were contacted by the CM Options service (100 per cent) but the vast majority of the General group actively contacted the service themselves (95 per cent of the General group had made an inbound call to CM Options, five per cent had an outbound call from the service).

## 4.2.2 Call length

Table 4.1 shows the total length of time parents reported spending on the telephone to the CM Options service at the Baseline interview, across all the conversations they may have had up to this point. The majority of parents reported spending around five to ten minutes (46 per cent) or around 15 to 30 minutes (39 per cent) in conversation with the CM Options service. Looking at Table 4.1, it is clear that parents in the General group tended to report having spent longer in conversation with the CM Options service, with 16 per cent reporting having had conversations lasting 45 minutes or longer, compared with nine per cent of the Jobcentre Plus group. The same pattern can also be seen for shorter calls, with the Jobcentre Plus group being more likely to have had short calls, for example, half reported calls of around five to ten minutes (51 per cent), compared to a third of the General group (34 per cent). Given that the Jobcentre Plus group are those who have been referred to the CM Options service it might be expected that they have reported shorter calls than the General group who (as we have seen in section 4.2.1 above) tended to make contact with the CM Options service themselves.

With regard to benefit receipt, the General group claiming benefits were more likely to have had longer conversations with the CM Options service than those not receiving benefits. For example, 22 per cent of the General group claiming benefits had calls of 45 minutes or more, compared with 13 per cent of this group not claiming benefits (Appendix A, Table A.6).

There were no significant differences looking at call length by parental role or separation type (tables not shown).

**Table 4.1 Call length at Baseline, by route into CM Options**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview who remembered CM Options service contact at Baseline interview*

Length of call	Route into CM Options		Total	
	Jobcentre Plus	General		
	%	%		%
1 minute or less	5	1		4
Around 5 to 10 minutes	51	34		46
Around 15 to 30 minutes	36	49		39
45 minutes or more	9	16		11
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>601</i>	<i>1751</i>		<i>2352</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>867</i>	<i>1563</i>		<i>2430</i>

### 4.2.3 Number of calls

Parents were asked how many calls in total they had had with the CM Options service at the time of the Baseline interview. As seen in Table 4.2, two-thirds of parents (66 per cent) recalled having had just one conversation with the CM Options service, almost a quarter of parents reported having had two calls (23 per cent), with a minority reporting three calls or more. There were no significant differences in the number of calls by route into CM Options, benefit status, parental role or separation type (tables not shown).

**Table 4.2 Number of calls with CM Options service at Baseline**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview who remembered CM Options service contact at Baseline interview*

Number of calls	Total %
One	66
Two	23
Three	7
Four	2
Five or more	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	2310
<i>Unweighted base</i>	2386

### 4.2.4 Topics discussed with the CM Options service

Parents were asked about the types of topics they had discussed with the CM Options service, including such things as the different types of child maintenance available. Table 4.3 shows that the majority of parents had discussed their family circumstances (85 per cent), their relationship with their ex-partner (73 per cent) and the various child maintenance options which were available to them (71 per cent). Parents' discussions with CM Options will of course be influenced by their personal circumstances and whether or not they already have a maintenance arrangement and as such these results should be interpreted in this context. Around six in ten had discussed making a private arrangement (58 per cent) and making a CSA arrangement (62 per cent).

Table 4.3 shows that those in the General group were more likely to have discussed all three maintenance-related topics than those in the Jobcentre Plus group.

- A total of 82 per cent of the General group had discussed the various child maintenance options, 69 per cent had discussed private arrangements and 76 per cent had discussed the CSA.

- In the Jobcentre Plus group 66 per cent had discussed the various child maintenance options, 55 per cent private arrangements and 57 per cent the CSA.

This may be linked to the fact that those in the General group were more likely to have contacted the CM Options service themselves, rather than being referred, and as such may have been more interested in discussing child maintenance than the Jobcentre Plus group who were called by the CM Options service. Furthermore, the General group were more likely to have discussed their family circumstances (92 per cent) and their relationship with their ex-partner (80 per cent) than the Jobcentre Plus group (83 per cent and 71 per cent respectively).

**Table 4.3 Whether discussed topic with CM Options service at Baseline, by route into CM Options**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview who remembered CM Options service contact at Baseline interview*

Topic	Route into CM Options		Total	%
	Jobcentre Plus	General		
	%	%		
Discussed family circumstances	83	92	85	
Discussed relationship with ex-partner	71	80	73	
Discussed the various child maintenance options	66	82	71	
Discussed private arrangements	55	69	58	
Discussed CSA arrangements	57	76	62	
<i>Weighted base for family</i>	<i>1711</i>	<i>593</i>	<i>2305</i>	
<i>Unweighted base for family</i>	<i>1519</i>	<i>855</i>	<i>2374</i>	
<i>Weighted base for relationship</i>	<i>1716</i>	<i>596</i>	<i>2312</i>	
<i>Unweighted base for relationship</i>	<i>1533</i>	<i>857</i>	<i>2390</i>	
<i>Weighted base for options</i>	<i>1716</i>	<i>596</i>	<i>2312</i>	
<i>Unweighted base for options</i>	<i>1533</i>	<i>857</i>	<i>2390</i>	
<i>Weighted base for private</i>	<i>1727</i>	<i>595</i>	<i>2322</i>	
<i>Unweighted base for private</i>	<i>1537</i>	<i>857</i>	<i>2394</i>	
<i>Weighted base for CSA</i>	<i>1709</i>	<i>593</i>	<i>2302</i>	
<i>Unweighted base for CSA</i>	<i>1527</i>	<i>854</i>	<i>2381</i>	

Looking at topics discussed by the separation characteristics of the parents (Table 4.4), we can see that there appears to be a link between the types of arrangements parents discussed and the length of separation and level of contact between parents and the non-resident parent and child:

- The 'long-term, bitter' parents (who were characterised as long-term separated, having bitter separation and little or no contact with their ex-partner) were less likely to have discussed making private arrangements

(47 per cent), than parents in the groups 'medium-term, contact', 'recent, friendly, contact', and 'recent, mixed, contact'.

- Parents in the groups 'recent, friendly, contact' and 'recent, mixed, contact' (those who are newly separated and in contact with their ex-partner) were the most likely to have discussed making a private arrangement (73 per cent and 72 per cent respectively).
- Parents in the group 'recent, friendly, contact' (newly separated, with contact and *friendly* relationships) were the least likely to have discussed the CSA (48 per cent compared to 66 per cent for the 'long-term, bitter', 'medium-term, contact' and 'recent, mixed, contact' groups).

This suggests that newly separated parents with more contact may be more interested in making private arrangements than arrangements using the CSA, particularly in situations where there is a good quality of relationship between parents. Parents who are characterised as not having been in a relationship with the other parent of their child, the 'never in a relationship' group, were less likely to have discussed *all* of the topics compared with the other groups of parents.

**Table 4.4 Whether discussed topic with CM Options service at Baseline, by separation type**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview who remembered CM Options service contact at Baseline interview*

Topic	Separation type					Total
	Long-term, bitter	Medium-term, contact	Recent, friendly, contact	Recent, mixed, contact	Never in a relationship	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Discussed family circumstances	85	87	85	88	77	85
Discussed relationship with ex-partner	74	75	71	72	60	73
Discussed the various child maintenance options	69	73	71	75	56	71
Discussed private arrangements	47	64	73	72	26	58
Discussed CSA arrangements	66	66	48	66	46	62
<i>Weighted base for family</i>	<i>923</i>	<i>498</i>	<i>391</i>	<i>380</i>	<i>113</i>	<i>2305</i>
<i>Unweighted base for family</i>	<i>942</i>	<i>516</i>	<i>398</i>	<i>428</i>	<i>90</i>	<i>2374</i>
<i>Weighted base for relationship</i>	<i>935</i>	<i>500</i>	<i>388</i>	<i>376</i>	<i>114</i>	<i>2312</i>
<i>Unweighted base for relationship</i>	<i>955</i>	<i>519</i>	<i>397</i>	<i>428</i>	<i>91</i>	<i>2390</i>
<i>Weighted base for options</i>	<i>935</i>	<i>500</i>	<i>388</i>	<i>376</i>	<i>114</i>	<i>2312</i>
<i>Unweighted base for options</i>	<i>955</i>	<i>519</i>	<i>397</i>	<i>428</i>	<i>91</i>	<i>2390</i>
<i>Weighted base for private</i>	<i>936</i>	<i>502</i>	<i>392</i>	<i>378</i>	<i>114</i>	<i>2322</i>
<i>Unweighted base for private</i>	<i>959</i>	<i>517</i>	<i>401</i>	<i>426</i>	<i>91</i>	<i>2394</i>
<i>Weighted base for CSA</i>	<i>928</i>	<i>500</i>	<i>389</i>	<i>372</i>	<i>113</i>	<i>2302</i>
<i>Unweighted base for CSA</i>	<i>949</i>	<i>518</i>	<i>398</i>	<i>425</i>	<i>91</i>	<i>2381</i>

Parents who had discussed making private arrangements or CSA arrangements with the CM Options service were asked whether these conversations covered various other related topics (Table 4.5 and Table 4.6 and Appendix A, Tables A.7 and A.8). As noted previously, parents' discussions with CM Options will have been influenced by their personal circumstances and maintenance status at the time of the call.

As Table 4.5 shows, of those who had discussed private arrangements, more than half had discussed how to negotiate with their ex-partner (56 per cent), around half how to work out how much maintenance should be paid (49 per cent) and just over two-fifths had discussed how to record a private arrangement (42 per cent). With regards to separation type, the 'recently, friendly, contact' group were the most likely to discuss all private arrangement topics (62 per cent discussed how to negotiate, 59 per cent how to work out how much the amount and 54 per cent how to record a private arrangement), with those being separated for longer – the 'long-term, bitter' group – being less likely (56 per cent discussed negotiation, 44 per cent how to work out the amount and 39 per cent how to record a private arrangement). There were no clear patterns looking at route into CM Options (Appendix A Table A.7), benefit status or parental role (tables not shown).

**Table 4.5 Private arrangement topics discussed at Baseline, by separation type**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview who discussed private arrangements at Baseline interview*

Topics discussed	Separation type					Total
	Long-term, bitter	Medium-term, contact	Recent, friendly, contact	Recent, mixed, contact	Never in a relationship	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Discussed how to negotiate with ex-partner	56	52	62	53	[61]	56
Discussed how to work out amount of maintenance	44	45	59	52	[38]	49
Discussed how to record private arrangement	39	36	54	45	[27]	42
<i>Weighted base for negotiate</i>	<i>437</i>	<i>315</i>	<i>283</i>	<i>265</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>1326</i>
<i>Unweighted base for negotiate</i>	<i>476</i>	<i>334</i>	<i>302</i>	<i>312</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>1452</i>
<i>Weighted base for amount</i>	<i>432</i>	<i>319</i>	<i>284</i>	<i>265</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>1328</i>
<i>Unweighted base for amount</i>	<i>472</i>	<i>338</i>	<i>305</i>	<i>313</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>1457</i>
<i>Weighted base for record</i>	<i>421</i>	<i>316</i>	<i>280</i>	<i>267</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>1313</i>
<i>Unweighted base for record</i>	<i>460</i>	<i>336</i>	<i>303</i>	<i>317</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>1444</i>

Nearly three-quarters of parents who discussed the CSA with the CM Options service stated that they had talked about what the CSA could do for them (72 per

cent) with over half discussing how the CSA calculates the amount of maintenance (52 per cent) and how they ensure payments are made (57 per cent). Table 4.6 shows that those in the General group were more likely to have discussed all CSA-related topics than those in the Jobcentre Plus group. For example, 68 per cent of the General group had discussed how the CSA calculate the amount of maintenance compared with just 45 per cent of the Jobcentre Plus group. There was no clear pattern looking at benefit status, parental role (tables not shown) or separation type (Appendix A, Table A.8).

**Table 4.6 CSA arrangement topics discussed at Baseline, by route into CM Options**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview who discussed CSA arrangements at Baseline interview*

Topics discussed	Route into CM Options		
	Jobcentre Plus	General	Total
	%	%	%
Discussed how CSA calculate amount of maintenance	45	68	52
Discussed what the CSA can do for you	70	78	72
Discussed how CSA enforce payment	55	62	57
<i>Weighted base for calculate</i>	<i>940</i>	<i>438</i>	<i>1379</i>
<i>Unweighted base for calculate</i>	<i>832</i>	<i>647</i>	<i>1479</i>
<i>Weighted base for what CSA can do</i>	<i>967</i>	<i>443</i>	<i>1410</i>
<i>Unweighted base for what CSA can do</i>	<i>854</i>	<i>643</i>	<i>1497</i>
<i>Weighted base for enforce</i>	<i>963</i>	<i>446</i>	<i>1409</i>
<i>Unweighted base for enforce</i>	<i>850</i>	<i>652</i>	<i>1502</i>

#### 4.2.5 Signposting and leaflets

Parents were asked whether the CM Options service had signposted them to other organisations. Signposting involves giving parents the contact information, usually a telephone number, for other organisations which the CM Options service agent believes may be useful to them given their circumstances and needs, for example, the Citizens Advice Bureau or Refuge; or transferring them to another telephone service, such as the CSA. Over half of parents (57 per cent) reported that they had not been signposted by the CM Options service. Those in the General group were more likely to have been signposted (49 per cent were signposted, compared with 40 per cent in the Jobcentre Plus group); those in this group who were signposted were more likely to have followed this up (19 per cent) compared with those in the Jobcentre Plus group (7 per cent) (Table 4.7). Furthermore, those within each group who were not claiming benefits were slightly more likely to report following up on signposting than those who were claiming low income benefits. For example, 21 per cent of the General group not claiming benefits were signposted and followed it up, compared to 18 per cent of the General group claiming benefits. (Appendix A, Table A.9).



**Table 4.7 Whether signposted at Baseline, by route into CM Options**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview who remembered CM Options service contact at Baseline interview*

Whether signposted	Route into CM Options		Total
	Jobcentre Plus	General	
	%	%	%
Not signposted	60	51	57
Signposted, not followed up	34	29	33
Signposted, and followed up	7	19	10
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1700</i>	<i>580</i>	<i>2280</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1516</i>	<i>841</i>	<i>2357</i>

Looking further at signposting by separation type, it emerged that those parents in the 'recent, mixed, contact' group were the most likely to have been signposted (51 per cent compared to 40 to 45 per cent of other groups) and were also most likely to have followed up signposting (17 per cent compared to 3 to 10 per cent of the other groups). (Appendix A, A.10). There was no significant difference in signposting by parental role (table not shown).

Fifty per cent of parents had been sent leaflets by the CM Options service following their conversation (Table 4.8). Those who were more recently separated and in contact with their ex-partner were slightly more likely to have received leaflets and to have read them following CM Options service contact, that is, those parents in the separation types 'recent, friendly, contact' (39 per cent were sent and read all leaflets) and 'recent, mixed, contact' (40 per cent, compared with 33 to 34 per cent of other groups). There were no significant differences by route into CM Options group, benefit status or parental role.

**Table 4.8 Whether parents were sent leaflets and read leaflets, by separation type**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview who remembered CM Options service contact at Baseline interview*

Whether sent leaflets and whether read them	Separation type					Total
	Long-term, bitter	Medium-term, contact	Recent, friendly, contact	Recent, mixed, contact	Never in a relationship	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Not sent leaflets	54	50	45	43	48	50
Sent leaflets, not read any	7	7	9	10	11	8
Sent leaflets, read some	6	8	6	7	7	7
Sent leaflets, read all	33	34	39	40	34	35
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>928</i>	<i>495</i>	<i>378</i>	<i>364</i>	<i>114</i>	<i>2280</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>949</i>	<i>510</i>	<i>392</i>	<i>415</i>	<i>91</i>	<i>2357</i>



### 4.3 Use of the CM Options service: at Outcomes

This section looks at whether parents used the CM Options service in the six-month period between the Baseline interview and the Outcomes interview. Similar to the previous section, it examines the nature of the contact for those parents who had conversations with the CM Options service during this period. The majority of parents (91 per cent) had not had contact with the CM Options service between interviews; however, the General group were more likely than the Jobcentre Plus group to report contact in the six months between interviews, 14 per cent and eight per cent respectively (table not shown).

#### 4.3.1 Call length

Table 4.9 shows the total length of time parents reported spending on the telephone to the CM Options service at the Outcomes interview. Similar to the responses at the Baseline interview, the majority of parents reported spending around five to ten minutes (39 per cent), or around 15 to 30 minutes (40 per cent) in conversation with the CM Options service. The General group were again more likely to report calls lasting over 45 minutes (28 per cent) compared to those in the Jobcentre Plus group (16 per cent).

**Table 4.9 Call length at Outcomes, by route into CM Options**

*Base: Parents who remembered CM Options service contact at Outcomes interview*

Length of call	Route into CM Options		Total	%
	Jobcentre Plus	General		
	%	%		%
1 minute or less	+	0		+
Around 5 to 10 minutes	42	33		39
Around 15 to 30 minutes	42	40		40
45 minutes or more	16	28		20
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>158</i>	<i>83</i>		<i>241</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>139</i>	<i>111</i>		<i>250</i>

#### 4.3.2 Number of calls

Table 4.10 shows the number of calls parents stated having with the CM Options service in the six-month period between the Baseline and the Outcomes interviews. There was a greater range reported than at the Baseline interview, with a third reporting one call (35 per cent), more than a quarter reporting two calls (27 per cent) and a similar proportion reporting four or five or more calls with the CM Options service during this period (23 per cent in total). Looking at the difference in the number of calls by route into CM Options group, Table 4.10 shows that parents in the Jobcentre Plus group were more likely to report having a

single call (42 per cent) than those in the General group (23 per cent), with the latter being twice as likely to have had five or more calls than the former, 24 per cent and 12 per cent respectively.

**Table 4.10 Number of calls at Outcomes, by route into CM Options**

*Base: Parents who remembered CM Options service contact at Outcomes interview*

Number of calls	Route into CM Options		Total	
	Jobcentre Plus	General		
	%	%		%
1	42	23		35
2	27	26		27
3	13	22		16
4	7	5		7
5 or more	12	24		16
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>158</i>	<i>83</i>		<i>241</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>139</i>	<i>111</i>		<i>250</i>

### 4.3.3 Topics discussed with the CM Options service

Parents were asked about the types of topics they had discussed with the CM Options service in the six months period in between the Baseline and Outcomes interviews. The majority of parents who had been in contact had discussed their personal circumstances (Table 4.11):

- In total 82 per cent had discussed their family circumstances.
- In total 76 per cent had discussed what their relationship with their ex-partner is like.

Further, seven in ten parents had discussed the different types of maintenance arrangements available (70 per cent). It is important to note that follow-up calls with CM Options will be very much influenced by parents' circumstances and information needs and as such the topics discussed in additional calls with the service may be a reflection of the topics parents were interested in at that time.

**Table 4.11 Topics discussed at Outcomes, by route into CM Options**

*Base: Parents who remembered CM Options service contact at Outcomes interview*

Topics discussed	Route into CM Options		Total
	Jobcentre Plus	General	
	%	%	%
Discussed family circumstances	82	81	82
Discussed relationship with ex-partner	78	72	76
Discussed various child maintenance options	71	67	70
Discussed private arrangements	47	47	47
Discussed CSA arrangements	66	71	68
<i>Weighted base for family</i>	164	87	251
<i>Unweighted base for family</i>	143	114	257
<i>Weighted base for relationship</i>	165	85	250
<i>Unweighted base for relationship</i>	144	114	258
<i>Weighted base for Options</i>	163	90	253
<i>Unweighted base for Options</i>	142	116	258
<i>Weighted base for private</i>	165	91	256
<i>Unweighted base for private</i>	144	117	261
<i>Weighted base for CSA</i>	163	89	252
<i>Unweighted base for CSA</i>	142	114	256

Looking in more depth at the different topics parents had discussed with regard to maintenance:

- Altogether 47 per cent had discussed making a private arrangement with their ex-partner (Table 4.11), (Appendix A, Table A.11) of which:
  - Sixty-eight per cent had discussed negotiating with their ex-partner.
  - Fifty-six per cent had discussed how to work out the amount of maintenance.
  - Thirty-eight per cent had discussed how to record a private arrangement.
- A total of 68 per cent had discussed using the CSA to make a child maintenance arrangement (Table 4.11), (Appendix A, Table A.12) of which:
  - Seventy-eight per cent had discussed what the CSA can do for them.
  - Fifty-two per cent discussed how the CSA calculate the amount of child maintenance.
  - Sixty per cent discussed how the CSA enforces payment.

There were no significant differences in topics discussed by route into the CM Options service, (Table 4.11, and Appendix A, Tables A.11 and A.12). Due to the

small numbers of parents who reported having discussions with the CM Options service at the Outcomes interview stage, the topics discussed by benefit status, parental role and separation type have not been examined.

#### **4.3.4 Signposting and leaflets**

The majority of parents had not been signposted to other organisations in their conversations with the CM Options service during this period (69 per cent), and only 10 per cent of all parents followed up on this by contacting the organisation they were signposted to (table not shown).

Similarly less than half of parents (42 per cent) recalled being sent leaflets following their contact with the CM Options service between the Baseline and Outcomes interviews, although the vast majority of those who received leaflets reported having read some or all of them (38 per cent of those parents who contacted the service in between the Baseline and Outcomes interview). Again, it should be noted that parents who were in further contact with CM Options may not have had any need for additional signposting or leaflets at this stage.

### **4.4 Use of the telephone service overall**

This section examines the pattern of use of the CM Options telephone service by parents over the nine months from initial contact to Outcomes interview. It also looks at how helpful parents reported their contact with the CM Options service overall.

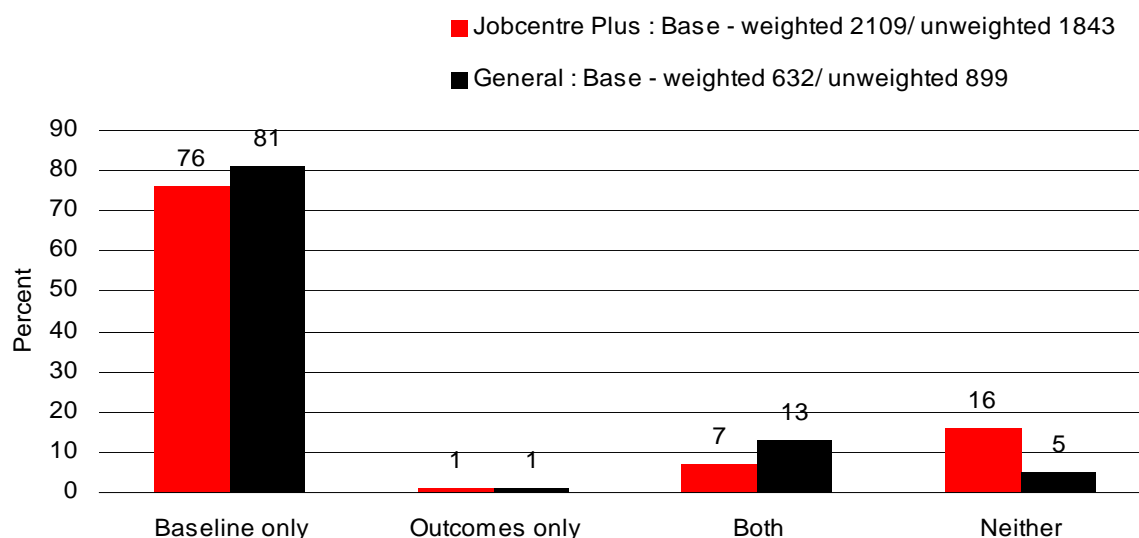
#### **4.4.1 Pattern of use**

Figure 4.1 shows how parents reported their use of the telephone service. It is clear that the majority of parents reported having used the telephone service at the Baseline only (78 per cent) (Appendix A, Table A.13). The General group were slightly more likely to report this (81 per cent) than the Jobcentre Plus group (76 per cent). Furthermore, a greater proportion of the Jobcentre Plus group (16 per cent, compared to 5 per cent in the General group) stated that they could not remember having any contact with the CM Options telephone service at either stage, despite the fact the CM Options service Management Information records have shown that they were contacted by the CM Options service.

Only a small proportion of parents (8 per cent overall) reported that they had been in contact with the CM Options service at both the Baseline and the Outcomes interview, although the General group were more likely to report this (13 per cent) than the Jobcentre Plus group (seven per cent). This fits in with what we have seen earlier in the chapter in relation to the General group: they were more likely to have called CM Options themselves, have had longer calls and were more likely

to discuss a range of topics with the CM Options service, suggesting that they may be more actively searching for information and support about child maintenance compared to the Jobcentre Plus group.

**Figure 4.1 Pattern of use of the telephone service, by route into CM Options**



#### 4.4.2 How helpful parents found their CM Options service contact overall

Parents were asked how helpful they found their overall contact with the CM Options service, including all telephone and face-to-face contact and website usage. Overall parents were positive about how helpful they found their contact, with the majority reporting that it was either very helpful (34 per cent) or quite helpful (33 per cent). Only five per cent of parents overall reported that their contact was not helpful at all (see Table 4.12).

Those parents who were referred from Jobcentre Plus were less likely than those in the General group to have found their contact with the CM Options service helpful (79 per cent of the General group found contact helpful compared to 63 per cent of the Jobcentre Plus group). This may be due to the fact that all parents in this group were referred from Jobcentre Plus, so were called by the CM Options service, thus may not necessarily have been in a situation where they would benefit from, or be interested in, the information and support provided by the service, whereas most of the General group called the CM Options service themselves. There was no clear pattern when looking at helpfulness by benefit status or parental role (tables not shown).

**Table 4.12 How helpful parents found their CM Options service contact overall, by route into CM Options**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

How helpful parents found CM Options service overall	Route into CM Options		Total
	Jobcentre Plus	General	
	%	%	%
Very helpful	30	46	34
Quite helpful	33	33	33
Neither helpful nor unhelpful	18	9	16
Not very helpful	5	6	5
Not at all helpful	6	3	5
Can't remember	7	3	6
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>2092</i>	<i>634</i>	<i>2726</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1832</i>	<i>904</i>	<i>2736</i>

Looking at helpfulness by separation type (Table 4.13), it is clear that some groups of parents found their CM Options service contact more helpful than others. Parents who were more recently separated and had lots of contact with their ex-partner, 'recent, friendly, contact' and 'recent, mixed, contact' groups, were the most likely to report their contact having been very or quite helpful. For example, 39 per cent of parents in the 'recent, friendly, contact' group stated that they found the CM Options service very helpful, compared with 30 per cent of those in the 'long-term, bitter' group. This suggests that the CM Options service may be a more useful source of information and support for newly separated parents where there is contact. This is supported by the fact that those in the 'long-term, bitter' group were most likely to report that their contact was not very or not at all helpful (15 per cent compared to six to ten per cent of the other groups); this group comprises of parents who have been separated for a long time and are not currently in contact with their ex-partner. Furthermore, the 'never in a relationship' group of parents, who are characterised by having never been in a relationship with the other parent of their child and likely not to be in current contact, were the least likely to have found the CM Options service very helpful (25 per cent compared to 30 to 41 per cent of the other groups) and were the most likely not to be able to remember how useful their contact was (13 per cent compared to four to eight per cent of the other groups).

**Table 4.13 How helpful parents found the CM Options service overall, by separation type***Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

<b>How helpful parents found CM Options service overall</b>	<b>Separation type</b>					<b>Total</b>
	Long-term, bitter	Medium- term, contact	Recent, friendly, contact	Recent, mixed, contact	Never in a relationship	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very helpful	30	34	39	41	25	34
Quite helpful	31	34	37	31	34	33
Neither helpful nor unhelpful	15	20	12	17	18	16
Not very helpful	8	3	3	4	4	5
Not at all helpful	7	4	5	2	6	5
Can't remember	8	5	4	5	13	6
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1121</i>	<i>585</i>	<i>454</i>	<i>432</i>	<i>135</i>	<i>2726</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1112</i>	<i>586</i>	<i>443</i>	<i>484</i>	<i>111</i>	<i>2736</i>

## 4.5 Likelihood of using the CM Options service in the future

All parents were asked how likely they were to contact the CM Options service again in the future, Table 4.14 shows the parents' responses. There was a fairly even spread of answers, with around a third of parents replying that they would contact the CM Options service again (32 per cent), slightly more than a third that they would not contact the CM Options service (38 per cent) and slightly less than a third that they were unsure whether they would contact the CM Options service (30 per cent). This may reflect parents' different views on whether or not they will need additional information in the future.

Those parents who were in the General group (37 per cent) were more likely than those in the Jobcentre Plus group (30 per cent) to state they would contact the CM Options service again. This is unsurprising given that those in the General group were more likely to have actively contacted the CM Options service initially. With regards to separation type and benefit status, there was no clear pattern in terms of which groups were more or less likely to contact the service again (tables not shown).

**Table 4.14 Whether parents would contact the CM Options service in the future, by route into CM Options**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

Whether would contact in future	Route into CM Options		Total
	Jobcentre Plus	General	
	%	%	%
Yes	30	37	32
No	40	32	38
Unsure – depends on circumstances	30	32	30
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>2124</i>	<i>637</i>	<i>2761</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1855</i>	<i>906</i>	<i>2761</i>

## 4.6 Use of the CM Options service website

As mentioned previously, in addition to the telephone service, there is also a CM Options service website available to provide information and support to separated and separating parents. This section explores the nature of parents' use of the website at both the Baseline interview and the Outcomes interview, and also looks at the pattern of website use overall. Note that the sample was drawn from parents who had contact with the service via the telephone helpline, so this section examines parents who have had telephone contact *and* used the website. It does not include parents who have used the website but not used the telephone helpline.

### 4.6.1 Use of the website at Baseline

At the Baseline interview parents were asked whether they had looked at the CM Options service website. Only a minority of parents had looked at the website (15 per cent). However, those in the General group were far more likely (34 per cent) than those in the Jobcentre Plus group to have looked at the website (8 per cent), (Table 4.15.). This supports what was seen earlier about the General group seeming to be more motivated to find out about child maintenance (hence getting in contact with the CM Options service themselves and having longer, more in-depth conversations) compared with the Jobcentre Plus group who were all referred to the service.



**Table 4.15 Whether parents had looked at the website at Baseline, by route into CM Options**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview who remembered CM Options service contact at Baseline interview*

Whether looked at website	Route into CM Options		Total
	Jobcentre Plus	General	
	%	%	%
Yes	8	34	15
No	92	66	85
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1750</i>	<i>600</i>	<i>2351</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1563</i>	<i>867</i>	<i>2430</i>

Parents who were not claiming benefits were more likely than those in groups who were claiming benefits to have looked at the website (Appendix A, Table A.14). For example, 39 per cent of the General group who were not claiming benefits had used the website, compared with 22 per cent of the General group who were claiming benefits. Non-resident parents were more likely than parents with care to report having used the website, (35 per cent compared with 13 per cent. (Appendix A, Table A.15).

There were also differences in whether parents had used the website by separation type, with the 'never in a relationship' group of parents emerging as the least likely to have used the website (eight per cent compared to between 12 and 19 per cent of the other separation types, Table 4.16).

**Table 4.16 Whether parents had looked at the website at Baseline, by separation type**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview who remembered CM Options service contact at Baseline interview*

Whether looked at the website at Baseline	Separation type					Total
	Long-term, bitter	Medium-term, contact	Recent, friendly, contact	Recent, mixed, contact	Never in a relationship	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	12	19	14	18	8	15
No	88	81	86	82	92	85
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>947</i>	<i>506</i>	<i>398</i>	<i>385</i>	<i>115</i>	<i>2351</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>970</i>	<i>525</i>	<i>406</i>	<i>437</i>	<i>92</i>	<i>2430</i>

Parents who had used the website were also asked to select, from a pre-coded list, where they had got the CM Options service website address from. The most commonly cited sources were another website, the CM Options telephone service and Jobcentre Plus (Appendix A, Table A.16).

### **4.6.2 Use of the website at Outcomes**

Fewer than one in ten parents reported having used the CM Options service website between the Baseline and the Outcomes interview (eight per cent). However, following the pattern seen at the Baseline stage, the General group were more likely to report this (11 per cent) than the Jobcentre Plus group (seven per cent), (Appendix A, Table A.17). As with the Baseline stage, non-resident parents were more likely to report having used the website (15 per cent) at the Outcomes stage than parents with care (eight per cent), (Appendix A, Table A.18). There were no significant differences in website usage by benefit status or separation type (tables not shown).

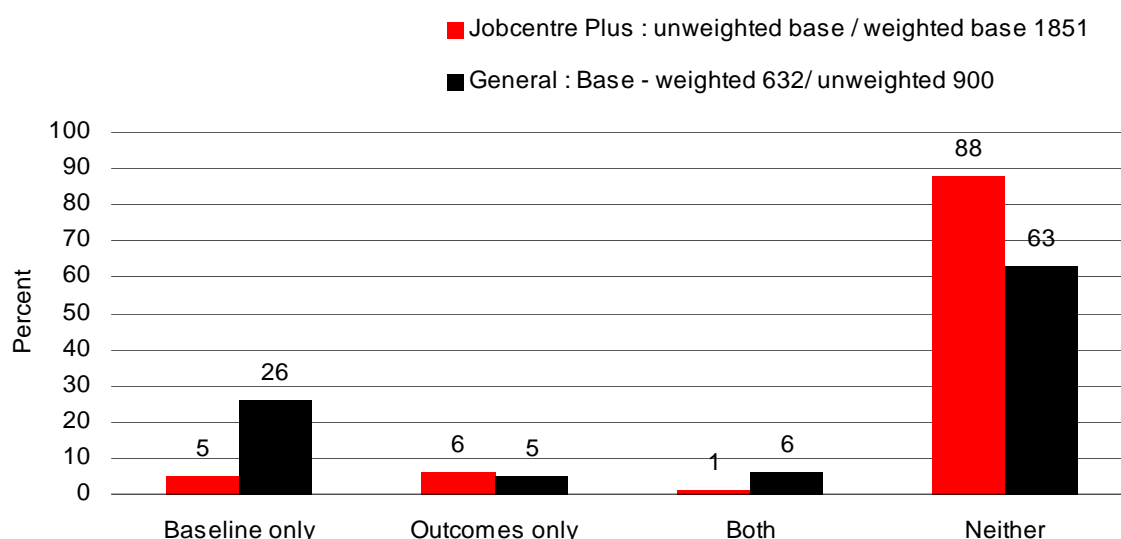
Of those parents who reported using the website between the Baseline and Outcomes interviews, the vast majority reported that they found it either very helpful (37 per cent) or quite helpful (46 per cent), (table not shown). Parents who had used the website at the Outcomes stage were also asked to select, from a pre-coded list, where they had got the CM Options service website address from. The most commonly cited sources were Jobcentre Plus, from a search engine and from the CM Options service (Appendix A, Table A.19.).

### **4.6.3 Pattern of website use**

Figure 4.2 shows how parents reported their use of the website. It is clear that the majority of parents reported having not used the website at either stage (82 per cent overall), (Appendix A, Table A.20). The General group were more likely to have looked at the website at some point (37 per cent) than the Jobcentre Plus group (12 per cent), which supports the idea that the General group were more motivated to find out about child maintenance than the Jobcentre Plus group.

Overall parents were more likely to report having used the CM Options service website at the time of the Baseline interview only (ten per cent overall), with over a quarter of the General group reporting this (26 per cent). It should be noted that parents' varying use of the website may reflect their differing need for information at different times.

**Figure 4.2 Pattern of use of the website, by route into CM Options**



## 4.7 Use of the face-to-face service

In addition to the telephone service and the website, the CM Options service also has a face-to-face service which is available to more vulnerable parents. Parents who stated that they had been in contact with the CM Options service between the Baseline and the Outcomes interviews were asked whether they had used the face-to-face service, in addition to or instead of the telephone service:

- Only one per cent of parents used the face-to-face service and the telephone service.
- Three per cent recalled using the face-to-face service, but not the telephone service, though this is likely due to parents not remembering contact with the telephone helpline as parents have to access the face-to-face service via the telephone helpline.

There were no significant differences in use by route into CM Options group, benefit status or separation type (tables not shown).

## 4.8 Summary

In relation to parents' initial contact with CM Options, prior to the Baseline interviews:

- Most reported calls of between five to ten minutes in length (46 per cent) or 15 to 30 minutes in length (39 per cent), with those in the General group more likely to report longer call lengths than the Jobcentre Plus group.

- Two-thirds of parents stated that they had had just one telephone conversation with the CM Options service (66 per cent).
- The majority of parents had discussed different types of child maintenance arrangements and it appears that more newly separated parents, where there was more contact, were more likely to discuss private arrangements. For example, 73 per cent of the 'recent, friendly, contact' group discussed private arrangements compared to 47 per cent of the 'long-term, bitter' group. Those parents in the General group were more likely to discuss all types of arrangements than those in the Jobcentre Plus group.
- Over half of parents were signposted to other relevant organisations by the CM Options service (57 per cent).
- Similarly half of parents received leaflets following their contact with CM Options (50 per cent) and the majority of these parents had read some or all of the leaflets (42 per cent).

The vast majority of parents (91 per cent) had not been in contact with the CM Options service in the six-month period between the Baseline and Outcomes interviews. Those in the General group were slightly more likely to have been in contact (14 per cent) than parents referred by Jobcentre Plus (eight per cent).

Looking at those who had been in contact between the Baseline and Outcomes interviews:

- Most reported call lengths of either five to ten minutes (39 per cent) or 15 to 30 minutes (40 per cent).
- Most parents had discussed the different types of child maintenance arrangements available to them (70 per cent).
- Unlike the Baseline interview, a relatively small proportion of parents had been signposted (31 per cent) or received leaflets (42 per cent) following their contact with the CM Options service, possibly due to them already having received leaflets or having been signposted at their initial contact.

Parents were positive about how helpful they found their contact with the CM Options service overall, with the majority reporting that it was either very helpful (34 per cent) or quite helpful (33 per cent).

When asked whether they would be likely to contact the CM Options service in the future, there was a fairly even spread with around a third of parents replying that they would contact the CM Options service, that they wouldn't contact the CM Options service and that they were unsure.

Only a minority of parents reported using the CM Options service website at the Baseline (15 per cent) and at the Outcomes interview (9 per cent). However, at both stages the General group were more likely to report using the website (34 per cent of the General group used the website at the Baseline stage compared to eight per cent of Jobcentre Plus parents, whilst 11 per cent of the General group used the website at the Outcomes stage, compared to seven per cent of the Jobcentre Plus group).

Although they appear to be different in terms of socio-demographic characteristics (see Chapter 3), non-resident parents were similar to parents with care in terms of their use of the CM Options service, except that they were more likely to have used the CM Options website at Baseline and Outcomes.

# 5 Maintenance arrangements

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the maintenance arrangements that parents using the Child Maintenance Options service (CM Options) had. It starts by looking at the proportion of parents that had made arrangements eight to nine months after contact with CM Options, and then goes on to look at the type of arrangements they had made. Whilst it is useful to look at whether or not parents had arrangements and what type they had, a more in-depth way of considering maintenance arrangements is to look at the quality of them. The chapter, therefore, goes on to examine whether the maintenance arrangements parents had set up were working or not, and the extent to which parents thought their arrangements were fair and were happy with them. The next section of this chapter examines parents whose maintenance arrangements broke down in between the two interviews, and the reasons they gave for this breakdown. Child maintenance is often not the only type of financial support non-resident parents provide parents with care after separation, so the final part of this chapter also examines financial support that parents might have outside of their maintenance arrangements.

## 5.2 Definition of ‘child maintenance’

The definition of child maintenance used in this study was developed to comply with the definition of maintenance used by the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission which, as well as including the regular financial payments traditionally defined as ‘child maintenance’, also includes ad hoc financial arrangements and non-financial arrangements for support. As such, the definition of ‘child maintenance arrangement’ used in this study includes the following.

- An arrangement made through the Child Support Agency (CSA).
- An arrangement made through the courts.
- A ‘private’ arrangement. This entails an agreement between parents for regular or ad hoc financial support. This could be a formal agreement, for example, one that has been written down by the parent, or a more informal, verbal agreement. It also includes non-financial support arrangements where the parents consider the care and contact arrangements between the child and the non-resident parent to be part of their child maintenance arrangements. This could be used, for example, in situations where the

non-resident parent is unable to pay child maintenance, but instead cares for the child whilst the parent who resides with the child goes to work. The term private arrangement has been replaced more recently by the term 'family-based arrangement' which was used in the Green Paper 'Strengthening families, promoting parental responsibility: the future of child maintenance' (DWP, 2011). However, the term 'private arrangements' is used throughout this report as this term was used in the interviews with parents.

Parents may have multiple types of child maintenance arrangements in place at any one time. For example, they may have a CSA arrangement and also a private arrangement, with their ex-partner. Throughout the analysis, where parents had multiple arrangements in place, only one child maintenance arrangement has been reported. A hierarchy of child maintenance arrangements was established to determine which arrangement would be reported with the most 'formal' arrangement parents had taking priority.<sup>26</sup>

### **5.3 Maintenance arrangements**

By the point of the Outcomes interview, eight to nine months after contact with the CM Options service, more than half of parents had a maintenance arrangement, (56 per cent) and slightly less than half did not (44 per cent).

In Table 5.1 comparisons between Jobcentre Plus referrals and the General group show that the General group were more likely to have an arrangement in place, with seven in ten of them having set up an arrangement by this point (72 per cent), compared to half (51 per cent) of the Jobcentre Plus group. Comparison between benefit and non-benefit cases shows that the parents who were not claiming benefits were more likely to have an arrangement than those who were. Three quarters of the General group without benefits (76 per cent) had an arrangement compared to 63 per cent of those claiming benefits and 55 per cent of the Jobcentre Plus group without benefits had an arrangement compared to 49 per cent of those claiming benefits (table in Appendix A, Table A.21).

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<sup>26</sup> The hierarchy of arrangements is as follows: formal financial arrangement (whether CSA, private or court); ad hoc financial private arrangement; non-financial private arrangement.

**Table 5.1 Maintenance arrangement, by route into CM Options***Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

	Route into CM Options		
	Jobcentre Plus	General	Total
	%	%	
Arrangement	51	72	56
No arrangement	49	28	44
<i>Weighted base</i>	2072	617	2689
<i>Unweighted base</i>	1809	878	2687

Table 5.2 shows the proportions of each of the separation types with and without maintenance arrangements at the time of the Outcomes interview. There is an association between having a maintenance arrangement and contact between parents and between the non-resident parent and child.

- The group where there is most contact and who were most recently separated, that is, the ‘recent, friendly, contact’ group, were the most likely to have a maintenance arrangement (76 per cent).
- The ‘long-term, bitter’ group where there was little contact between the parents, or the non-resident parent and child, and who tended to have been separated for longer, were much less likely to have an arrangement in place, with more than half of them having no arrangement (56 per cent).
- The group of parents who were the least likely to have an arrangement were the ‘never in a relationship’ group with only one in five (20 per cent) having set up an arrangement by the time of the Outcomes interview.

**Table 5.2 Maintenance arrangements at Outcomes, by separation types***Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

	Separation type					Total
	Long-term, bitter	Medium-term, contact	Recent, friendly, contact	Recent, mixed, contact	Never in a relationship	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Arrangement	44	62	76	68	20	56
No arrangement	56	38	24	32	80	44
<i>Weighted base</i>	1094	588	448	430	129	2689
<i>Unweighted base</i>	1087	586	435	473	106	2687

Although there were relatively few non-resident parents included in the survey (only four per cent of the total sample), there were sufficient to allow a comparison between the proportions of parents with care and non-resident parents with maintenance arrangements. Non-resident parents were much more likely to have an arrangement in place with three quarters of them having an arrangement (75 per cent) compared to around half of parents with care (55 per cent).



## 5.4 When maintenance arrangements were made

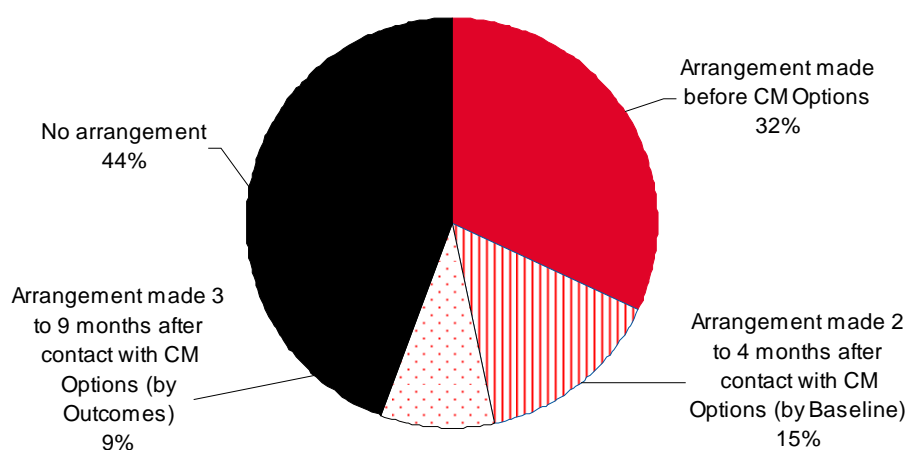
Figure 5.1 shows the maintenance status of all parents at the Outcomes interview, and when the arrangements they had at that point (eight to nine months after contact with CM Options) were set up.

- Three in ten parents already had an arrangement at the time of contact with the CM Options service (32 per cent), which was still in place eight to nine months later, at the time of the Outcomes interview.
- Overall 24 per cent of parents made an arrangement after contact with CM Options: 15 per cent of parents made an arrangement in the two to four months following contact with CM Options, and a further nine per cent made an arrangement in the subsequent six months (i.e. by the point of the Outcomes interview).

It is important to note that changes over time should not be interpreted as the impact of the CM Options service on parents. It is likely (as shown later) that at least some of the changes would have happened irrespective of the CM Options call. The extent to which these changes in maintenance status can be attributed to the CM Options service will be explored in Chapter 7.

**Figure 5.1 When parents made maintenance arrangements**

*Base: All parents at the Outcomes interview: Weighted base 2607 Unweighted 2597*



The General group were more likely to have made an arrangement following contact with CM Options: in total 42 per cent made an arrangement after contact (28 per cent by the point of the Baseline interview and 13 per cent by the time of the Outcomes interview), compared to 18 per cent Jobcentre Plus referrals (11 per cent by Baseline, and eight per cent by the time of the Outcomes interview), Table 5.3. Again it is important to note that this difference should not be attributed to a differential impact of the CM Options service on the General group and the

Evaluation of the Child Maintenance Options service

Jobcentre Plus group. The difference could reflect a difference in motivation and interest levels of the two groups and, indeed, this is supported by the more proactive use of the service amongst the General group that was seen in Chapter 4.

**Table 5.3 When parents made maintenance arrangement, by route into CM Options**

*Base: All parents at the Outcomes interview<sup>27</sup>*

	Route into CM Options		
	Jobcentre Plus	General	Total
When arrangement was made	%	%	
Arrangement made before CM Options <sup>28</sup>	32	30	32
Arrangement made within two to four months following contact with CM Options (by Baseline interview)	11	28	15
Arrangement made between three and nine months after contact with CM Options (by Outcomes interview)	8	13	9
No arrangement at the time of the Outcomes interview <sup>29</sup>	49	28	44
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>585</i>	<i>2607</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1759</i>	<i>838</i>	<i>2597</i>

In terms of benefit status (Table 5.4), parents who were not claiming benefits were more likely to have an arrangement in place at the time of the CM Options call, which was still in place nine months later at the time of the Outcomes call, compared to those claiming benefits and this was the case for both the Jobcentre Plus group and the General group. For example, 37 per cent of the Jobcentre Plus group and 36 per cent of the General group not claiming benefits had an arrangement in place at the time of the CM Options call, compared to only 29 per cent and 17 per cent of the equivalent groups of parents claiming benefit.

<sup>27</sup> The figures presented in Table 5.3 have been rounded. As such, when added together, the total may be slightly different to what is presented in the text, which is the correct total.

<sup>28</sup> This includes those parents who changed their arrangement after contacting CM Options. Although in these cases there has been a change in the type of arrangement in place, there is no brand new arrangement and hence they are not counted as a new arrangement in the analysis.

<sup>29</sup> This includes those parents who made an arrangement before or after contact with CM Options, which subsequently broke down.

**Table 5.4 Maintenance arrangements at Outcomes, by benefit status***Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

<i><b>When arrangement was made</b></i>	Jobcentre Plus + benefits %	Jobcentre Plus no benefits %	General + benefits %	General no benefits %	Total %
Arrangement made before CM Options <sup>30</sup>	29	37	17	36	32
Arrangement made within two to four months following contact with CM Options (by Baseline interview)	13	8	31	27	15
Arrangement made between three and nine months after contact with CM Options (by Outcomes interview)	7	9	15	13	9
No arrangement at the time of the Outcomes interview <sup>31</sup>	51	46	37	24	44
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1202</i>	<i>820</i>	<i>183</i>	<i>402</i>	<i>2607</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1070</i>	<i>689</i>	<i>251</i>	<i>587</i>	<i>2597</i>

Looking at the separation types in terms of when arrangements were made (Table 5.5) it is apparent that length of separation, contact and quality of relationship between parents are key.

- Groups where there was contact between ex-partners and where there was a non-hostile relationship were more likely to have an arrangement at the time of the CM Options call. For example, 40 per cent of the 'medium-term, contact group' and 46 per cent of the 'recent, friendly, contact' group had an arrangement at the time of CM Options contact (which was still in place nine months later), compared to 12 to 32 per cent of the other groups.
- Parents who were more recently separated appeared to be the ones most likely to make arrangements following contact with CM Options, irrespective of the quality of relationship between parents: around a third of the 'recent, mixed, contact' group (36 per cent) and the 'recent, friendly, contact' group (32 per cent) had made an arrangement following contact with CM Options, compared to less than a quarter of the 'medium-term, contact' group (23 per cent), 18 per cent of the 'long-term, bitter' group and only six<sup>32</sup> per cent of the 'never in a relationship' group.

<sup>30</sup> This includes those parents who changed their arrangement after contacting CM Options

<sup>31</sup> This includes those parents who made an arrangement before or after contact with CM Options, which subsequently broke down.

<sup>32</sup> The figures presented in Table 5.5 have been rounded. As such, when added together, the total may be slightly different to what is presented in the text, which is the correct total.

**Table 5.5 Maintenance arrangements at Outcomes, by separation types***Base: All parents at the Outcomes interview*

	Separation type					Total
	Long-term, bitter	Medium-term, contact	Recent, friendly, contact	Recent, mixed, contact	Never in a relationship	
<b>When arrangement was made</b>	%	%	%	%	%	%
Arrangement made before CM Options <sup>33</sup>	25	40	46	32	12	32
Arrangement made within two to four months following contact with CM Options (by Baseline interview)	10	14	24	22	3	15
Arrangement made between three and nine months after contact with CM Options (by Outcomes interview)	8	9	8	14	2	9
No arrangement at the time of the Outcomes interview <sup>34</sup>	57	38	22	32	82	44
<i>Weighted base</i>	1062	576	432	413	125	2607
<i>Unweighted base</i>	1049	573	421	451	103	2597

Looking at parental status, it was found that a higher proportion of non-resident parents had an arrangement in place at the time of the CM Options call (51 per cent), compared to 31 per cent of parents with care. However, there was no significant difference in the proportions of parents with care and non-resident parents who made arrangements following contact with CM Options.

## 5.5 Types of maintenance arrangements

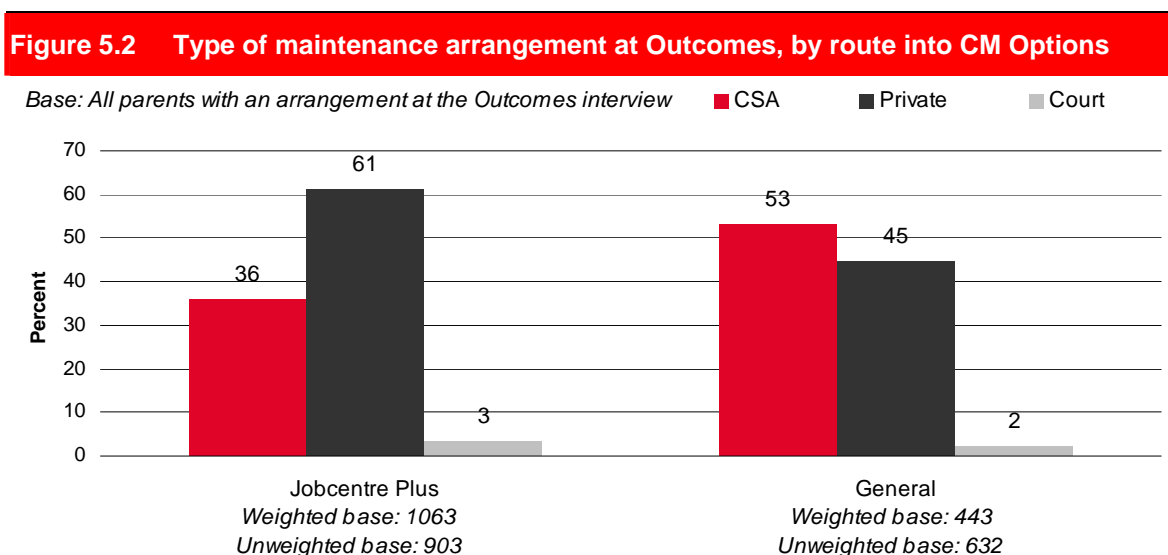
This section examines the different types of arrangement that parents using CM Options had made. These include: an arrangement made through the CSA; a private arrangement involving a formal or informal agreement between ex-partners for financial or non-financial support; or an arrangement made through the courts.

The most common form of arrangement was a private arrangement with more than half of parents having this type of arrangement (56 per cent). Two-fifths of parents had a CSA arrangement (41 per cent), with only small proportions of parents with a court arrangement (three per cent) (Appendix A, total column of Table A.22)

<sup>33</sup> This includes those parents who changed their arrangement after contacting Options

<sup>34</sup> This includes those parents who made an arrangement before or after contact with Options, which subsequently broke down.

Figure 5.2 shows the types of maintenance arrangement by the route into the CM Options service. The Jobcentre Plus group were more likely to have made a private arrangement just between themselves and their ex-partner, whereas the General group were more likely to have involved a third party. Sixty-one per cent of the Jobcentre Plus group had made a private arrangement compared to 45 per cent of the General group, whilst 53 per cent of the General group had used the CSA compared to 36 per cent of the Jobcentre Plus group.



There were no differences between the General group claiming benefits and those not claiming benefits, by type of arrangement. However, the Jobcentre Plus group not claiming benefits were more likely to have made an arrangement through the CSA (44 per cent) compared to the group claiming benefits (29 per cent), whilst the Jobcentre Plus group claiming benefits were more likely to have a private arrangement (69 per cent) compared to the group not claiming benefits (51 per cent) (Appendix A, Table A.22).

There was an association between the type of arrangement made and the level of contact between ex-partners (Table 5.6). Parents who were in the group where there was little or no contact were more likely to have an arrangement made through the CSA, whilst those where there was contact were more likely to have a private arrangement.

- The 'long-term, bitter' group were most likely to have made an arrangement through the CSA (66 per cent), compared to around half this proportion or less in the other groups of parents.
- Parents in the 'recent, friendly, contact' group were the most likely to have a private arrangement (86 per cent), with more than half of the other groups where there was some contact between parents also having private

arrangements (64 per cent of the 'recent, mixed contact' group, and 59 per cent of the 'medium-term, contact' group).

- There were too few of the 'never in a relationship' group with an arrangement to be able to comment on the types of arrangement they had, and the data for this group is just shown for information.

**Table 5.6 Maintenance arrangements at Outcomes, by separation types**

*Base: All parents with an arrangement at the Outcomes interview*

Type of arrangement	Separation type					Total
	Long-term, bitter	Medium-term, contact	Recent, friendly, contact	Recent, mixed, contact	Never in a relationship	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Statutory arrangement (CSA)	66	36	14	34	[65]	41
Private arrangement	29	59	86	64	[36]	56
Court arrangement	5	4	0	1	[ 0]	3
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>479</i>	<i>366</i>	<i>342</i>	<i>295</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>1506</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>485</i>	<i>368</i>	<i>329</i>	<i>333</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>1535</i>

There were no differences in the types of arrangements held by parents with care and non-resident parents.

## 5.6 Working arrangement

This section looks at whether parents have a 'working' maintenance arrangement eight to nine months after contact with CM Options. First, the section examines the definition of a working arrangement used. The section then looks at which groups of parents have working and non-working arrangements and what these arrangements looked like in terms of type, amount and how long they had been set up.

### 5.6.1 Definition of a 'working' arrangement

There are many possible ways to define what a 'working' child maintenance arrangement is. For the purposes of the analysis in this section, an arrangement is classified as working when it is either:

- A CSA arrangement where some amount is paid, always or usually on time.
- A private financial arrangement where some amount is paid, always or usually on time, or a private non-financial arrangement that is always or usually adhered to.
- A court arrangement where some amount is paid, always or usually on time.

All cases where there was sufficient information collected about the nature of the arrangement were classified as either working or non-working<sup>35</sup>.

The variables which were used to create the variable to examine if an arrangement was working are seen in Table 5.7.

**Table 5.7 Variables used to calculate working arrangements**

*Base: Parents where it was possible to establish whether arrangements were working or not at Outcomes*

	%
<b>How much maintenance is paid or received? (CSA, private financial or court arrangements)</b>	
All	73
Some	14
None	14
<b>How often is the maintenance on time? (CSA, private financial or court arrangements)</b>	
Always on time	61
Usually on time	20
More often on time than late	5
More often late than on time	6
Usually late	3
Never on time	6
<b>How often is the arrangement stuck to? (Private non-financial arrangements)</b>	
Always stuck to	60
Usually stuck to	23
More often stuck to than not	11
More often broken than not	2
Usually broken	3
Never stuck to	2
<i>Weighted base for amount paid</i>	<i>1206</i>
<i>Unweighted base for amount paid</i>	<i>1212</i>
<i>Weighted base for on time</i>	<i>1023</i>
<i>Unweighted base for on time</i>	<i>1034</i>
<i>Weighted base for stuck to</i>	<i>261</i>
<i>Unweighted base for stuck to</i>	<i>263</i>

<sup>35</sup> There were a number of cases where the parent had a child maintenance arrangement in place but it wasn't possible to establish whether it was compliant or non-compliant as the parents were either nil-assessed or the arrangement was in the process of being set up. There were 94 such cases.

## 5.6.2 Working Arrangements

Table 5.8 shows that just under two-thirds of parents were classified as having a working arrangement (64 per cent) with over a third reporting having a non-working arrangement (36 per cent).

Looking at working arrangements by separation type, Table 5.8 shows a higher proportion of parents in the 'recent, friendly, contact' group had working arrangements (81 per cent, compared to 50 to 68 per cent of the other groups). Given the positive nature of these relationships, it is unsurprising that a high proportion had working arrangements. This is supported by the findings that those with less friendly relationships, or relationships with low levels of contact, were less likely to have working arrangements, with only 50 per cent of parents in the 'long-term, bitter' group having working arrangements. Those who have been categorised as having a non-working arrangement were most prevalent in the 'long-term, bitter' group (50 per cent, compared with 19 to 35 per cent of the other groups). Only very small numbers of the 'never in a relationship' group had an arrangement and as such the base size is too small for comparison between working and non-working arrangements and is included here for information only,

**Table 5.8 Type of working arrangements at Outcomes, by separation type**

*Base: Parents where it was possible to establish whether arrangements were working or not at Outcomes*

Type of arrangement	Separation type					Total
	Long-term, bitter	Medium-term, contact	Recent, friendly, contact	Recent, mixed, contact	Never in a relationship	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Working arrangement	50	65	81	68	[43]	64
Non-working arrangement	50	35	19	32	[57]	36
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>444</i>	<i>349</i>	<i>329</i>	<i>279</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>1423</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>454</i>	<i>348</i>	<i>316</i>	<i>313</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>1447</i>

With regards to benefit status (Table 5.9) those in the Jobcentre Plus group who were claiming benefits were more likely than those who were not claiming benefits to have a working arrangement in place: (71 per cent) compared with those not claiming (59 per cent), whereas in the General group those who were not claiming benefits were slightly more likely to have a working arrangement (63 per cent) than those claiming benefits (56 per cent).



**Table 5.9 Type of working arrangements at Outcomes, by benefit status**

Base: Parents where it was possible to establish whether arrangements were working or not at Outcomes

Type of arrangement	Benefit status				Total
	Jobcentre Plus + benefits	Jobcentre Plus no benefits	General + benefits	General no benefits	
	%	%	%	%	%
Working arrangement	71	59	56	63	64
Non-working arrangement	29	41	44	37	36
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>570</i>	<i>436</i>	<i>114</i>	<i>303</i>	<i>1423</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>498</i>	<i>364</i>	<i>140</i>	<i>445</i>	<i>1447</i>

Non-resident parents were more likely to have working maintenance arrangements (89 per cent) compared to parents with care (63 per cent), (Appendix A, Table A.23). This may be due to a tendency amongst non-resident parents to report their behaviour in terms of working arrangements more favourably than parents with care.

There were no significant differences in working arrangements and non-working arrangements looking at parents' route into the CM Options service (Appendix A, Table A.24).

### 5.6.3 Nature of working and non-working arrangements<sup>36</sup>

Table 5.10 shows the different types of child maintenance arrangements and whether or not they could be classified as working or non-working. Looking at working arrangements, nearly two-thirds (65 per cent) of working arrangements were private arrangements compared to 56 per cent of all arrangements and a third of CSA arrangements (33 per cent).

There was a clear distinction looking at the types of non-working arrangements, with CSA arrangements emerging as the type of child maintenance arrangement most likely to be non-working. Over half of non-working arrangements were CSA arrangements (58 per cent), compared to 41 per cent of all arrangements, and over a third of all non-working arrangements were private arrangements (38 per cent). This may reflect the quality of relationships that parents have who choose to use the CSA or to make a private arrangements, for example, where there is a conflicting relationship parents may choose to use the CSA, and as a result of conflict it is less likely that the CSA arrangement would work. Parents with private

<sup>36</sup> All reference to working and non-working arrangements in this section are based on the definition of working used in this report and is based on respondents' perceptions. This has not been checked against CSA Management Information records.

arrangements, on the other hand, might be more likely to have a more amicable relationship to begin with, and as a result a working arrangement may be more likely.

**Table 5.10 Arrangement type by working arrangements**

*Base: Parents where it was possible to establish whether arrangements were working or not at Outcomes*

Type of arrangement	Working arrangements		Total
	Working arrangement	Non-working arrangement	
	%	%	%
CSA	33	58	41
Private	65	38	56
Court	2	4	3
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>854</i>	<i>494</i>	<i>1349</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>857</i>	<i>500</i>	<i>1357</i>

Looking at the annual amount of maintenance received/paid (or supposed to be received/paid) in child maintenance arrangements one-fifth of parents had arrangements for £500 or less annually (20 per cent) and just six per cent received or paid more than £4000 (Appendix A, Table A.25)<sup>37</sup>. There were no significant differences looking at working and non-working arrangements.

## 5.7 Parents' views of their maintenance arrangements

In this section, parents' views of their maintenance situations are explored. The first part of the section looks at parents' views of how fair their maintenance arrangements are, for all parents who had arrangements. Parents were also asked how happy they were with the financial and maintenance arrangements they had with their ex-partner, regardless of whether or not they had an arrangement. This question was introduced for the second stage of interviews in order to identify parents who may not have a maintenance arrangement, but are nonetheless happy with that situation.

### 5.7.1 Fairness of arrangements

Fairness was measured on a four-point scale ('very fair', 'quite fair', 'not very fair' and 'not at all fair') at both points in time, while happiness was measured on a five-point scale ('very happy', 'fairly happy', 'neither', 'not very happy', and 'very unhappy').

<sup>37</sup> This analysis does not include arrangements which were classified as 'other financial arrangements' for the reason noted above, nor does it include non-financial private arrangements, as these were arrangements for non-monetary support (such as childcare).

There were a range of views with regards to how fair parents thought their arrangements were as can be seen in Table 5.11.

- In total, six in ten parents felt that their arrangements were fair (25 per cent thought they were 'very fair' and 37 per cent thought they were 'quite fair'), and almost two-fifths thought they were unfair (15 per cent thought they were 'not very fair' and 23 per cent thought they were 'not at all fair').
- The Jobcentre Plus group were more likely to think their arrangement was very fair: 27 per cent thought their arrangement was very fair compared to 19 per cent of the General group.
- Whilst there were no differences between the General group in terms of benefit status, the Jobcentre Plus group not claiming benefits were more likely to think their arrangement was unfair (44 per cent) compared to those claiming benefit (29 per cent). (Appendix A, Table A.26).
- There were no differences detected in terms of parents' beliefs about the fairness of their maintenance arrangements according to their parental status.

**Table 5.11 Fairness of maintenance arrangement, by route into CM Options**

*Base: All parents with an arrangement at Outcomes who indicated the fairness of their arrangement*

Fairness of arrangements	Jobcentre Plus		Route into CM Options General		Total	
		%		%		%
Very fair		27		19		25
Quite fair		37		36		37
Not very fair		14		17		15
Not at all fair		21		28		23
<i>Weighted base</i>		<i>966</i>		<i>415</i>		<i>1380</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>		<i>816</i>		<i>569</i>		<i>1385</i>

Table 5.12 shows that the length of separation and the level and quality of contact between parents appeared to be associated with how fair parents thought their arrangements were. The 'recent, friendly contact' group of parents were more likely to believe their arrangements were 'very fair' (52 per cent compared with 12 to 21 per cent for other groups), whereas the 'long-term bitter' group had a higher percentage of parents who believed that they were 'not at all fair' (42 per cent compared with four to 25 per cent for other groups). Due to the low base size for the 'never in a relationship' group, results for this group of parents have not been commented on and are shown for information only.

**Table 5.12 Fairness of arrangements, by separation types**

*Base: All parents with an arrangement at Outcomes who indicated the fairness of their arrangement.*

Fairness of arrangements	Separation type					Total %
	Long-term, bitter %	Medium-term, contact %	Recent, friendly, contact %	Recent, mixed contact %	Never in a relationship %	
Very fair	12	21	52	17	[11]	25
Quite fair	27	39	38	51	[21]	37
Not very fair	19	15	5	19	[45]	15
Not at all fair	42	25	4	13	[24]	23
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>412</i>	<i>350</i>	<i>336</i>	<i>255</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>1380</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>405</i>	<i>342</i>	<i>321</i>	<i>298</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>1385</i>

Parents with private arrangements were more likely to think their arrangements were fair than those with statutory arrangements. Parents who had a private arrangement were more likely to think their arrangement was 'very fair' or 'quite fair' (33 per cent and 41 per cent respectively), compared with parents who had a statutory maintenance arrangement in place (12 per cent and 32 per cent respectively) (Table 5.13). Just under two-fifths (39 per cent) of parents with a statutory maintenance arrangement in place believed that it was 'not at all fair', compared with only 13 per cent of parents with a private arrangement. Note that data for court arrangements has been included for illustrative purposes but, due to the small base size, it has not been commented on.

**Table 5.13 Fairness of arrangements, by maintenance arrangement type**

*Base: All parents with an arrangement at Outcomes who indicated the fairness of their arrangement.*

<b>Fairness of arrangements</b>	<b>Maintenance type</b>			<b>Total</b>
	CSA arrangement	Private arrangement	Court arrangement	
	%	%	%	%
Very fair	12	33	[13]	25
Quite fair	32	41	[22]	37
Not very fair	17	13	[23]	15
Not at all fair	39	13	[41]	23
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>497</i>	<i>845</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>1380</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>463</i>	<i>883</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>1385</i>

### 5.7.2 Happiness with maintenance situation

Parents were also asked how happy they were with all of their financial and child maintenance arrangements with their ex-partner, regardless of whether they had an arrangement or not. This question was asked of parents without maintenance arrangements as well as those with arrangements, in order to identify those parents who may be quite happy with their maintenance situation, despite not having an arrangement in place.

Table 5.14 illustrates that there were a range of views in terms of happiness:

- Similar proportions of parents reported they were happy (17 per cent were 'very happy', 23 per cent 'fairly happy') and unhappy (16 per cent were 'not very happy', 28 per cent were 'very unhappy').
- Parents referred by Jobcentre Plus were more likely to be happy with their situation. A slightly greater proportion of Jobcentre Plus referrals were 'very happy' with their maintenance situation (18 per cent compared with 12 per cent of the General group).
- A greater proportion of the General group were 'very unhappy' with their maintenance situation (33 per cent compared with 27 per cent).

**Table 5.14 Happiness with maintenance situation, by route into CM Options***Base: All parents at Outcomes who indicated their happiness*

<b>Happiness with arrangements</b>	<b>Route into CM Options</b>		<b>Total</b>
	<b>Jobcentre Plus</b>	<b>General</b>	
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Very happy	18	12	17
Fairly happy	22	24	23
Neither	17	15	17
Not very happy	15	16	16
Very unhappy	27	33	28
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>2080</i>	<i>629</i>	<i>2709</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1813</i>	<i>892</i>	<i>2705</i>

No differences were reported in terms of parents' happiness with their maintenance situation according to their benefit status with the exception of the Jobcentre Plus group receiving benefits. A greater proportion of Jobcentre Plus referrals who were receiving benefits reported that they were 'very happy' compared with parents in other groups (20 per cent compared with 10 to 16 per cent). (Appendix A, Table A.27).

In Table 5.15 it can be seen that there were some clear differences in terms of parents' happiness with their maintenance situations in each of the separation types. Those parents that had a more friendly relationship with their ex-partner, and where the ex-partner has more contact with the child, reported higher levels of happiness with their current arrangements. For example, the 'recent, friendly, contact' group had a greater proportion of parents who reported that they were 'very happy' with their arrangements (43 per cent compared to eight to 14 per cent of those in other groups). In contrast, the 'long-term bitter' group were more likely to be very unhappy with their arrangements (40 per cent compared with eight to 28 per cent of the other groups of parents).

**Table 5.15 Happiness with maintenance situation, by separation types**

Base: All parents at Outcomes who indicated their happiness

Happiness with arrangements	Separation type					Total
	Long-term, bitter	Medium-term, contact	Recent, friendly, contact	Recent, mixed, contact	Never in a relationship	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very happy	11	14	43	10	8	17
Fairly happy	17	26	27	29	18	23
Neither	15	16	16	19	23	17
Not very happy	16	18	7	17	24	16
Very unhappy	40	25	8	25	28	28
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1113</i>	<i>586</i>	<i>449</i>	<i>430</i>	<i>131</i>	<i>2709</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1098</i>	<i>584</i>	<i>436</i>	<i>478</i>	<i>109</i>	<i>2705</i>

Parents' happiness with their maintenance situation according to their maintenance arrangement types are presented in Table 5.16. Overall, those with private arrangements were happiest with their maintenance situation and those with CSA arrangements or no arrangement were the most unhappy.

- Parents who had a private arrangement were more likely to report that they were 'very happy' (32 per cent) relative to parents with CSA arrangements (six per cent) or no arrangement (12 per cent).
- More than half of parents with a CSA arrangement reported that they were unhappy (19 per cent were 'not very happy', 34 per cent were 'very unhappy'). A similar proportion of those without a maintenance arrangement were also unhappy (17 per cent 'not very happy', 39 per cent 'very unhappy').
- A quarter of those without arrangements reported that they were happy with their maintenance situation despite not having an arrangement in place (12 per cent were 'very happy', 13 per cent were 'fairly happy').

**Table 5.16 Happiness with maintenance situation, by maintenance arrangement types***Base: All parents at Outcomes who indicated their happiness*

<b>Happiness with arrangements</b>	<b>Maintenance type</b>				<b>Total</b>
	CSA arrangement %	Private arrangement %	Court arrangement %	No arrangement %	
Very happy	6	32	[14]	12	17
Fairly happy	26	33	[14]	13	22
Neither	15	14	[16]	19	17
Not very happy	19	11	[17]	17	15
Very unhappy	34	11	[40]	38	28
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>610</i>	<i>847</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>1160</i>	<i>2660</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>609</i>	<i>878</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>1131</i>	<i>2659</i>

## 5.8 Arrangements that broke down

Parents who did not have an arrangement at the Baseline stage or the Outcomes stage, or who had an arrangement at the Baseline stage, which was no longer in place at the Outcomes stage were asked whether their arrangement had fallen through. Overall seven per cent of parents reported that they had an arrangement which had broken down between the Baseline and the Outcomes interview.

Parents were asked which reasons (from a pre-coded list) explained the breakdown of the maintenance arrangement; parents could choose as many reasons as were applicable. It is clear from Table 5.17 that the most frequently cited reason for the arrangement breaking down was because the non-resident parent did not pay the maintenance, with two-thirds of parents reporting this (64 per cent). This suggests that child maintenance arrangements may not remain in place if the non-resident parent is not compliant with the terms of the arrangement. Thirty-three per cent of parents reported that the reason for the breakdown was due to the fact that the non-resident parent could not afford to pay the maintenance, which may suggest that, at least for some of the non-compliant cases, there may be a problem with how realistic the arrangement is.

The third most commonly cited reason was that there were contact problems between the child and the non-resident parent (17 per cent). This is consistent with other literature in the area which suggests that parents may view contact and child maintenance as a two-way bargaining tool: non-resident parents may withhold payment if they are not permitted to see their child and parents with care may stop contact if child maintenance is not received (Wikeley 2007, Wikeley 2006).



**Table 5.17 Reasons maintenance arrangement broke down**

Base: All parents who reported having an arrangement which broke down between Baseline and Outcomes interviews <sup>38</sup>

Reason	Total %
Non-resident parent didn't pay	64
Non-resident parent couldn't afford to pay	33
Contact problems between non-resident parent and child	17
Disagreement about amount of maintenance that should be paid	11
Non-resident parent is unemployed or on benefits so can't pay	5
Disagreement about how often maintenance should be paid	4
Don't know where non-resident parent is living	3
Child too old to be eligible	2
Non-resident parent is in prison	1
Problems with CSA administration	1
Non-resident parent has health or psychological problems	1
Waiting for CSA to process the case	1
Non-resident parent is not in the country	+
None	12
<i>Weighted base</i>	282
<i>Unweighted base</i>	281

## 5.9 Financial support provided outside of maintenance

Thus far the report has looked at the child maintenance arrangements which are in place between parents; however, other financial exchanges exist **outside of these arrangements**. This section looks at the other financial support which non-resident parents may provide parents with care which parents said were not part of an arrangement with their ex-partner. First, the section looks at other types of support which are on going between ex-partners, or non-resident parents and children. Secondly, the section looks at any one-off capital contributions that parents may have made or received at the point of separation.

### 5.9.1 Additional financial support

Additional financial support received or paid by parents outside of child maintenance arrangements can take many forms. This section has included five different types of financial support under the title of 'additional financial support' provided by non-resident parents. This includes:

<sup>38</sup> Respondents could give more than one answer to this question therefore column totals do not add up to 100.

- payments made to the parent with care
- payments made to the child
- things bought for the parent with care
- things bought for the child
- things bought for the household.

It should be noted that parents may receive more than one of these types of support. Throughout this section, the different types of maintenance arrangement are examined, with regards to whether parents are receiving or paying any other financial support in addition to the maintenance arrangements in place.

### 5.9.2 CSA arrangements and other financial support

Overall, 28 per cent of parents with a CSA arrangement were receiving or providing some form of additional financial support. No difference was evident according to parents' route into the CM Options service or their benefit status and the sample sizes were too small to comment on differences by parental status or separation type.

### 5.9.3 Private arrangements and other financial support

As can be seen in Table 5.18, seven out of ten parents with a private arrangement in place had some other form of additional financial support (70 per cent). This did not differ according to users routes into the CM Options service. However, it did differ according to parents' benefit status, with a smaller proportion of parents in the General group receiving benefits reporting some additional form of financial support (47 per cent) compared with parents in each of the other groups (71 to 72 per cent), although the base size for this group is quite small so this finding should be treated with some caution.

**Table 5.18 Additional financial support by benefit status, for parents with a private arrangement at Outcomes**

*Base: Parents with a private arrangement at Outcomes*

	Benefit status				Total
	Jobcentre Plus + benefits	Jobcentre Plus no benefits	General + benefits	General no benefits	
Additional support	%	%	%	%	%
Private arrangement, financial support	72	71	47	72	70
Private arrangement, no financial support	28	29	53	28	30
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>421</i>	<i>230</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>151</i>	<i>849</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>369</i>	<i>188</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>260</i>	<i>881</i>

Non-resident parents were, again, more likely to report paying additional financial support, than parents with care reported receiving it. Seven in ten (68 per cent) parents with care who had a private arrangement in place, reported some form of additional financial support, compared to all non-resident parents (100 per cent) (Table 5.19).

**Table 5.19 Additional financial support by parental status, for parents with a private arrangement at Outcomes**

Base: Parents with a financial private arrangement at Outcomes<sup>39</sup>

Additional support	Parental status		Total	
	Parent with care	Non-resident parent		
	%	%		%
Private arrangement, financial support	68	100		70
Private arrangement, no financial support	32	0		30
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>793</i>	<i>46</i>		<i>846</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>205</i>	<i>66</i>		<i>881</i>

No differences were seen in terms of the proportions of parents with a financial private maintenance arrangement who reported some other form of additional financial support, according to their separation type.

#### 5.9.4 Those with no maintenance and other financial support

A quarter of parents without a child maintenance arrangement (25 per cent) with their ex-partner reported some form of additional financial support. No differences were apparent in terms of parents' route into the CM Options service, or according to their benefit status. Due to the small base size, the levels of additional financial support amongst parents with no maintenance arrangement have not been investigated according to parental status.

For those parents who did not have an arrangement, having recently separated, and having lots of regular contact between ex-partners and the non-resident parent and the child, was associated with higher rates of additional financial support being reported (Table 5.20). For example, the parents in the 'recent, friendly, contact' group (57 per cent) and the 'recent, mixed, contact' group (48 per cent) were more likely to report additional financial support, while the parents in the 'long-term, bitter' group (13 per cent) and the 'never in a relationship' group (eight per cent) were the least likely.

<sup>39</sup> Parents in shared care situations (10 cases) have not been presented in this table due to small base sizes, but they have been included in the total.

**Table 5.20 Additional financial support by separation type, for parents with no arrangement at Outcomes**

*Base: Parents with no arrangement at Outcomes*

Additional support	Separation type					Total
	Long- term, bitter	Medium term, contact	Recent, friendly, contact	Recent mixed, contact	Never in a relationship	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
No arrangement, financial support	13	36	57	48	8	25
No arrangement, no financial support	87	64	43	52	92	75
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>615</i>	<i>223</i>	<i>105</i>	<i>136</i>	<i>103</i>	<i>1182</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>602</i>	<i>218</i>	<i>105</i>	<i>140</i>	<i>86</i>	<i>1151</i>

### 5.9.5 Nature of additional financial support

Parents were asked about the types of additional financial support that they received or provided. Irrespective of the type of maintenance arrangement they had in place, the most commonly mentioned type was the non-resident parent buying things for the child, followed by the non-resident parent making a payment to the child. The least commonly mentioned type of support was the non-resident parent buying things for the parent with care, and the non-resident parent making payments to the parent with care.

More specifically it was found that:

- The majority of parents who reported receiving additional financial support stated that the non-resident parent buys things for the child (58 per cent of parents with a CSA arrangement, 67 per cent with a private arrangement and 75 per cent with no arrangement). The next most commonly reported form of support was the non-resident parent making payments to the child (22 per cent, 25 per cent and 35 per cent respectively).
- The least commonly mentioned form of additional support was the non-resident parent making payments to the parent with care (fewer than one per cent of parents with a CSA arrangement, three per cent with a private arrangement, and five per cent with no arrangement). This was followed by the non-resident parent making payments to the parent with care (four per cent, eight per cent and seven per cent respectively).
- A relatively small percentage of parents reported the non-resident parent buying things for the household (three per cent with a CSA arrangement, 15

per cent with a private arrangement and eight per cent with no arrangement).

### **5.9.6 One-off capital contributions**

Overall, very few users of the CM Options service reported receiving or providing any one-off capital contributions from or to their ex-partner (three per cent). Of the 86 respondents that reported a one-off capital contribution, the most commonly reported contribution was a cash lump sum (66 per cent). A quarter of those who received a one-off capital contribution reported that the contribution was a car (24 per cent), 18 per cent reported properties, and 11 per cent reported some other form of capital contribution.

## **5.10 Summary**

### **5.10.1 Maintenance arrangements**

- More than half of parents had arrangements in place (56 per cent) eight to nine months after contact with CM Options. The General group were more likely to have an arrangement in place (72 per cent) than the Jobcentre Plus group (51 per cent) and parents not claiming benefits were more likely to have an arrangement in place, particularly for the General group (76 per cent of the General group not claiming benefits compared to 63 per cent of the General group claiming benefits).
- Groups of parents who were more recently separated and where there was regular contact between the non-resident parent and the child and between ex-partners were more likely to have a maintenance arrangement in place. The 'recent, friendly, contact' group were the most likely to have an arrangement in place (76 per cent) while the 'long-term, bitter' group (44 per cent) and the 'never in a relationship' group (20 per cent) were the least likely.
- Non-resident parents were more likely to have a child maintenance arrangement than parents with care: 75 per cent compared to 55 per cent.
- Three in ten (32 per cent) of parents already had an arrangement in place at the time of the CM Options call that was still in place nine months later. Around a quarter of all parents (24 per cent) had made an arrangement following contact with CM Options.

### **5.10.2 Types of arrangements**

- Private arrangements were the most common type of arrangements made by parents with more than half of parents with arrangements having this type (56 per cent). Four in ten parents had arrangements made through the

CSA (41 per cent). Only very small proportions of parents had court arrangements (three per cent).

- The General group were more likely to have made a statutory arrangement: 53 per cent compared to 36 per cent of the Jobcentre Plus group. The Jobcentre Plus group, on the other hand, were more likely to have made a private arrangement: 61 per cent compared to 45 per cent of the General group.
- In groups where there were higher levels of contact between ex-partners, private arrangements were more common. In the 'recent, friendly, contact' group, 86 per cent had a private arrangement compared to 29 to 64 per cent of the other groups of parents. The 'long-term, bitter' group, where there was limited or no contact between ex-partners, were more likely to have made an arrangement through the CSA: 66 per cent of this group had a CSA arrangement compared to 14 to 36 per cent of the other groups.

### **5.10.3 Working arrangements**

- Nearly two-thirds of parents with arrangements had ones that were working (64 per cent) and over one-third had non-working arrangements (36 per cent).
- Parents who had more contact and a better quality of relationship between ex-partners were more likely to have a working arrangement. The 'recent, friendly, contact' group of parents were the most likely to have a working arrangement (81 per cent compared to 50 to 68 per cent of the other groups), whilst the 'long-term, bitter' group of parents were the most likely to have non-working arrangements (50 per cent had a non-working arrangement compared to 19 to 35 per cent of other groups of parents).
- Non-resident parents also emerged as more likely to report working arrangements than parents with care (89 per cent of non-resident parents had working arrangements, compared to 63 per cent of parents with care).
- Working arrangements were more likely to be private arrangements (65 per cent), rather than CSA arrangements (33 per cent) possibly reflecting the nature of parents' relationships.
- There was a range in the amount of maintenance paid (or supposed to be paid). One-fifth of parents had an arrangement for £500 per year or less (20 per cent), whilst around two-fifths of parents had maintenance arrangements that were for between £1000 and £2000 per year (36 per cent). There were no clear differences between working and non-working arrangements in terms of the amount of money involved.

#### 5.10.4 Parents' views of their arrangements

- There were a range of views with regards to how fair parents thought their arrangements were. Six in ten thought their arrangements were fair (25 per cent 'very fair', 37 per cent 'quite fair') whilst two-fifths thought they were not (15 per cent thought they were 'not very fair', and 23 per cent 'not at all fair').
- The Jobcentre Plus group were more likely than the General group to think their arrangement was fair (27 per cent of Jobcentre Plus parents thought it was 'very fair' compared to 19 per cent of the General group).
- The length of separation and level and quality of contact between ex-partners appeared to be associated with how fair parents thought their arrangements were. The 'recent, friendly, contact' group were more likely to think their arrangements were 'very fair': 52 per cent compared to 11 to 21 per cent of other groups, whilst the 'long-term bitter' group were least likely to think their arrangements were fair: 42 per cent thought they were 'not at all fair', compared to four to 25 per cent of other groups.
- Those with private arrangements were more likely to think their arrangements were fair, than those with arrangements made through the CSA: 33 per cent of those with a private arrangement thought it was 'very fair' compared to 12 per cent of those with a CSA arrangement.
- All parents were asked how happy they were with their maintenance situations, regardless of whether they had an arrangement or not. There was a range of views: 17 per cent were 'very happy', 23 per cent 'fairly happy', 17 per cent 'neither', 16 per cent 'not very happy' and 28 per cent 'very unhappy'.
- The Jobcentre Plus group were more likely to be happy than the General group: 18 per cent of the Jobcentre Plus group were 'very happy' compared to 12 per cent of the General group.
- Length of separation and quality of current relationships between ex-partners also appeared to be associated with happiness with maintenance situations. Of the 'recent, friendly, contact' group 43 per cent were 'very happy' with their situation compared to eight to 14 per cent of the other groups, 40 per cent of the 'long-term bitter' group were 'very unhappy' compared to eight to 28 per cent of other groups.
- Those with private arrangements were the most happy with their situations. Thirty-two per cent of parents with private arrangements were 'very happy', compared to six per cent of those with a CSA arrangement and 12 per cent of those with no arrangement.

### **5.10.5 Arrangements that broke down**

- Seven per cent of parents stated that they had a maintenance arrangement which broke down between the Baseline and the Outcomes interviews. The most commonly cited reasons for this breakdown were that the non-resident parent did not pay (64 per cent), the non-resident parent could not afford the amount of maintenance (33 per cent) and that there were contact problems between the child and the non-resident parents (17 per cent).

### **5.10.6 Additional financial support provided outside of maintenance**

- Financial support outside of maintenance was most common for those with a private arrangement. A larger percentage of parents with a private arrangement reported some form of additional financial support (70 per cent) compared with parents with a CSA arrangement (28 per cent) or no arrangement (25 per cent).
- All non-resident parents with a private agreement reported providing additional financial support (100 per cent), compared with seven in ten parents with care (69 per cent).
- The most commonly reported forms of additional financial support provided by the non-resident parent were buying things for the child (reported by between 58 to 75 per cent of parents), and the non-resident parent making payments to the child (reported by between 22 to 35 per cent of parents).
- Very few parents reported the non-resident parent making a one-off capital contribution to the parent with care (three per cent).



## 6 Parents without maintenance arrangements

This chapter explores parents' reasons for not having a maintenance arrangement at the time of the final Outcomes interview eight to nine months after contact with CM Options. It also reports on parents' views of their likelihood of making an arrangement in the future and, for those who stated that they were unlikely, their reasons for responding in this way.

### 6.1 Parents without maintenance arrangements

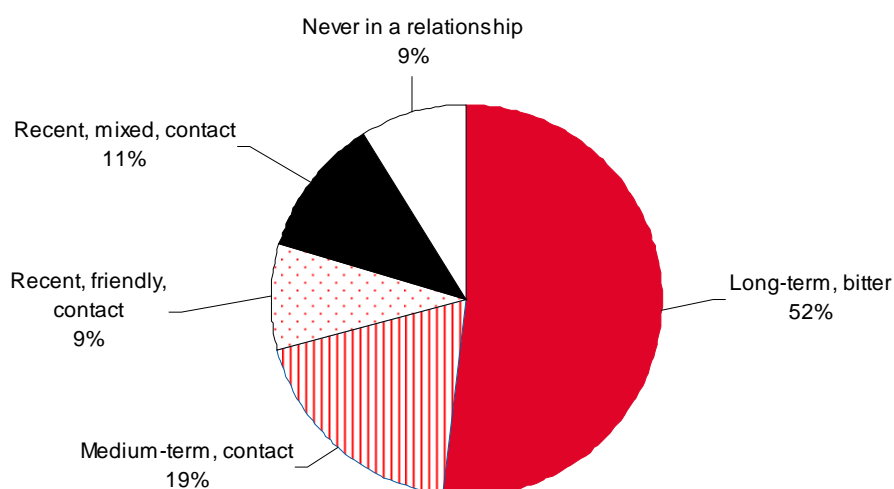
As shown in section 5.3 more than two-fifths of parents (44 per cent) did not have maintenance arrangements by the point of the Outcomes interview, eight to nine months after contact with the CM Options service.

Figure 6.1 below, shows the proportions of each of the separation types of parents without maintenance arrangements in place at the point of the Outcomes interview. An association between not having a maintenance arrangement and length of separation and level of contact between ex-partners is apparent.

- Of parents without maintenance arrangements around half (52 per cent) were in the 'long-term, bitter' group, (characterised by having little contact between parents and the non-resident parent and the child, and who tended to have been separated for longer). This compares to a third of parents with maintenance arrangements (32 per cent, Table 6.1). In addition, parents in the 'never in a relationship' group who had very little contact with their ex-partner made up a larger proportion of the parents without arrangements at nine per cent, compared to the group with arrangements where this group represented two per cent of the total.
- The groups of parents who had been separated for a shorter period and where there was more frequent contact between parents and the non-resident parent and child, made up a fifth of parents without maintenance: nine per cent in the 'recent, friendly, contact' and 11 per cent in the 'recent, mixed contact' group. This compares to more than double this proportion of parents with maintenance arrangements (23 per cent in the 'recent, friendly, contact' and 20 per cent in the 'recent-mixed contact' group).

**Figure 6.1 Parents without maintenance arrangements, by separation type**

Base: All parents at the Outcomes interview without maintenance arrangements:  
Weighted base 1183 Unweighted 1152



**Table 6.1 Separation types by maintenance arrangement at Outcomes interview**

Base: All parents at the Outcomes interview<sup>40</sup>

Separation type	Whether there is a maintenance arrangement		
	Arrangement	No arrangement	Total
	%	%	%
Long-term, bitter	32	52	41
Medium-term, contact	24	19	21
Recent, friendly, contact	23	9	17
Recent, mixed, contact	20	11	16
Never in a relationship	2	9	5
Weighted base	1506	1183	2767
Unweighted base	1535	1152	2767

## 6.2 Reasons for no maintenance arrangements

All parents who did not have a child maintenance arrangement in place at the time of the Outcomes interview were asked to choose from a pre-coded list of options for reasons why this was the case and parents were able to choose more than

<sup>40</sup> Parents where it was not possible to establish maintenance status (80 cases) have not been presented in this table, but they have been included in the total.

one reason<sup>41</sup>. Table 6.2 shows the reasons given by parents with care for not having an arrangement. As there were only a small number of non-resident parents without an arrangement, and the reasons provided by these parents were different to those given by parents with care they could not be combined. As such the reasons in this chapter are presented for parents with care only.

The most commonly cited reasons for not having an arrangement related to the ex-partner not being willing or able to pay maintenance, or the respondent not knowing the whereabouts of the ex-partner. For example, three in ten parents said that their ex-partner could not afford to pay maintenance (34 per cent), they did not know where their ex-partner was (29 per cent), or that their ex-partner objected to paying maintenance (29 per cent).

Jobcentre Plus referrals were more likely than the General group to report reasons for no maintenance arrangements due to issues to do with contact with their ex-partner. For example, 28 per cent of the Jobcentre Plus group said that they had no contact with their ex-partner compared to 15 per cent of the General group, whilst 26 per cent said that they did not want any contact with their ex-partner, compared to 15 per cent of the General group. The Jobcentre Plus group were also more likely to report that they preferred not to receive child maintenance than the General group (14 per cent compared with 4 per cent). The General group, on the other hand, were more likely to report reasons that suggested that they had considered maintenance in the past, such as having tried to make an arrangement in the past, but it not working (30 per cent compared to 22 per cent of Jobcentre Plus referrals) and that their ex-partner objected to paying maintenance (cited by 43 per cent of the General group compared to 28 per cent of the Jobcentre Plus group).

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<sup>41</sup> Parents who did not have a maintenance arrangement at the time of the Outcomes interview, but who had an arrangement which broke down between the Baseline and Outcomes interview were not asked why they had no arrangement. Instead these parents were asked why their arrangement broke down and this is reported in section 5.8.

**Table 6.2 Reasons for not having a maintenance arrangement, by route into CM Options (parents with care)**

Base: All parents with care, without a child maintenance arrangement at Outcomes interview<sup>42</sup>

Reason provided	Route into CM Options		
	Jobcentre Plus	General	Total
	%	%	%
Ex-partner cannot afford to pay any maintenance	34	34	34
Don't know where ex-partner is living	30	22	29
Ex-partner objects to paying child maintenance	28	43	29
Have no contact with ex-partner	28	15	26
Do not want any contact with ex-partner	26	15	24
Tried to make an arrangement in the past, but it did not work	22	30	23
There is a domestic violence issue	18	19	18
Not made one yet, but plan to in the future	16	16	16
Have not yet decided what to do about child maintenance	13	17	13
Prefer not to receive child maintenance	14	4	12
Do not want child to have contact with ex-partner	12	8	12
Ex-partner helps in an informal way	10	14	10
None	3	6	3
Other	2	2	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>883</i>	<i>116</i>	<i>1000</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>790</i>	<i>179</i>	<i>969</i>

According to parents' benefit status, few differences were seen in the reasons parents provided for not having an arrangement in place. In the General group, those parents not receiving benefits were nearly twice as likely as those receiving benefits to state that their ex-partner could not afford to pay any maintenance (43 per cent compared with 23 per cent). Parents in the General group receiving benefits were more likely than those not receiving benefits to attribute the reason they had no maintenance arrangement to not knowing where their ex-partner was living (32 per cent compared with 15 per cent) (Appendix A, Table A.28).

Looking at reasons given for not having an arrangement by separation types, it was found that the 'long-term, bitter' and the 'never in a relationship' groups were more likely to report issues around contact with their ex-partner, (Table 6.3). In contrast, the recently separated groups (i.e. the 'recent, friendly, contact' and 'recent, mixed, contact' groups) were more likely to report issues such as the ex-partner not being able to pay, or that they were planning to make an arrangement in the future.

<sup>42</sup> Respondents could give more than one answer to this question therefore column totals do not add up to 100.

For example, a greater proportion of parents in the 'long-term bitter' group and the 'never in a relationship' group reported not having contact with their ex-partner compared to parents in the other groups (35 per cent and 42 per cent, compared with two to 14 per cent in other groups). Similarly, parents in these groups were more likely to report not wanting contact with their ex-partner (31 per cent and 37 per cent compared with five to 14 per cent in the other groups) or not wanting their child to have contact with their ex-partner (16 per cent and 22 per cent compared with one to four per cent of other groups). The 'long-term, bitter' group were also more likely to report domestic violence compared to other groups: a quarter reported domestic violence (26 per cent) compared to less than half this proportion of the other groups (eight to ten per cent). Parents in the 'recent, friendly, contact' and 'recent, mixed, contact' group were more likely to report that their ex-partner was unable to pay (54 per cent and 56 per cent compared with 16 to 44 per cent of other groups) and that they were planning to make an arrangement in the future (29 per cent and 31 per cent compared with 11 to 17 per cent).

**Table 6.3 Reasons for not having a maintenance arrangement, by separation type (parents with care)**

Base: All parents with care, without a child maintenance arrangement at Outcomes interview<sup>43</sup>

Reason provided	Separation type					Total %
	Long-term, bitter %	Medium-term, contact %	Recent, friendly, contact %	Recent, mixed, contact %	Never in a relationship %	
Ex-partner cannot afford to pay any maintenance	28	44	54	56	16	34
Don't know where ex-partner is living	39	12	6	7	48	29
Ex-partner objects to paying child maintenance	32	33	16	35	13	29
Have no contact with ex-partner	35	14	2	9	42	26
Do not want any contact with ex-partner	31	14	5	10	37	24
Tried to make an arrangement in the past, but it did not work	25	26	13	22	14	23
There is a domestic violence issue	26	8	8	10	10	18
Not made one yet, but plan to in the future	12	17	29	31	11	16
Have not yet decided what to do about CM	12	18	19	17	2	13
Prefer not to receive child maintenance	13	11	13	10	12	12
Do not want child to have contact with ex-partner	16	4	1	4	22	12
Ex-partner helps in an informal way	4	16	40	17	2	10
None	3	5	4	1	2	3
Other	2	1	1	5	0	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>538</i>	<i>187</i>	<i>77</i>	<i>101</i>	<i>97</i>	<i>1000</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>525</i>	<i>182</i>	<i>79</i>	<i>101</i>	<i>82</i>	<i>969</i>

### 6.3 Likelihood of making an arrangement in the future

Parents without an arrangement at the time of the Outcomes interview were asked how likely they thought they were to make an arrangement in the future. There was a range of responses with two-fifths of parents reporting that this was 'not at all likely' (43 per cent), 17 per cent reported that it was 'likely' and 15 per cent that it was 'very likely' (Table 6.4). Overall, those in the General group had a slightly more positive view than Jobcentre Plus referrals. For example, 24 per cent of the General group reported that it was 'very likely' that they would set up an arrangement in the future, compared with 14 per cent of Jobcentre Plus referrals.

<sup>43</sup> Respondents could give more than one answer to this question therefore column totals do not add up to 100.

There were no significant differences between the parents claiming benefits and not claiming benefits in terms of likelihood of making an arrangement in the future.

**Table 6.4 Likelihood of making an arrangement in the future, by route into CM Options**

*Base: All parents with care, without a child maintenance arrangement at Outcomes interview*

Future arrangement	Route into CM Options			
	Jobcentre Plus	General		Total
	%		%	%
Very likely	14		24	15
Likely	17		15	17
Not very likely	18		18	18
Not at all likely	45		35	43
It depends	7		7	7
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>980</i>		<i>169</i>	<i>1148</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>880</i>		<i>240</i>	<i>1120</i>

In Table 6.5 it can be seen that overall, parents who had been separated for longer and where there was little contact between them and the non-resident parent and child, reported that they were less likely to make a maintenance arrangement in the future. In situations where there were greater levels of contact with the ex-partner, where the non-resident parent had contact with the child and where there was a recent separation, parents tended to feel more likely to establish a maintenance arrangement in the future.

For example, the 'recent, mixed, contact' group had the greatest proportion of parents reporting that they would make a maintenance arrangement in the future (51 per cent reporting that they were 'very likely' or 'likely'). Large proportions of the 'medium-term, contact' and 'recent, friendly, contact' groups also responded in this way (38 per cent and 37 per cent respectively said they were 'very likely' or 'likely'), while a lower proportion of the 'never in a relationship' group reported that they were likely to make an arrangement in the future (18 per cent said they were 'very likely' or 'likely'). Of those reporting that they were 'not very likely' or 'not at all likely' to make an arrangement in the future, relatively high proportions of parents in the 'long-term, bitter' and the 'never in a relationship' group responded in this way (68 per cent and 73 per cent respectively) compared with a smaller proportion of parents in the other groups (40 to 53 per cent).

**Table 6.5 Likelihood of making an arrangement in the future, by separation type***Base: All parents with care, without a child maintenance arrangement at Outcomes interview*

	Separation type					Total
	Long-term, bitter	Medium- term, contact	Recent, friendly, contact	Recent, mixed, contact	Never in a relationship	
<b>Future arrangement</b>	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very likely	13	16	22	27	7	15
Likely	14	22	15	24	11	17
Not very likely	18	17	18	18	16	18
Not at all likely	50	35	35	22	57	43
It depends	5	10	9	9	10	7
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>607</i>	<i>217</i>	<i>96</i>	<i>128</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>1148</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>592</i>	<i>215</i>	<i>96</i>	<i>133</i>	<i>84</i>	<i>1120</i>

As there were insufficient numbers of non-resident parents who did not have maintenance arrangements in place, data for this has not been presented or analysed.

## 6.4 Reasons why parents do not think they will be able to make an arrangement in the future

Parents who did not have a child maintenance arrangement in place at the time of the Outcomes interview, and indicated that they were 'not very likely' or 'not at all likely' to make one in the future were asked to choose from a list of pre-coded options why this was the case – more than one reason could be chosen (Table 6.6). Note that only the reasons given by parents with care are shown here as there were too few non-resident parents to report this table separately, and the reasons provided by non-resident parents were different to those given by parents with care and so could not be combined.

The majority of parents reported that they were unlikely to make an arrangement in the future due to issues around contact with their ex-partner or their ex-partner not being willing or able to pay. For example, three in ten said they had no contact with their ex-partner (31 per cent), a quarter said they didn't want any contact (24 per cent) or they did not know where their ex-partner was living (24 per cent). Three in ten said their ex-partner objected to paying maintenance (30 per cent) and a quarter said their ex-partner could not afford to pay (24 per cent). Only a very small proportion said they did not know how to go about setting up an arrangement (two per cent).



A higher proportion of the Jobcentre Plus group reported that they were unlikely to make an arrangement in the future due to issues of contact with their ex-partner. For example, 32 per cent of this group said they had no contact with their ex-partner, compared to 19 per cent of the General group. In addition, 24 per cent of the Jobcentre Plus group said they did not want any contact compared to 19 per cent of the General group. In comparison, the General group were more likely to report that their ex-partner objected to paying maintenance (44 per cent compared to 28 per cent of the Jobcentre Plus group) and that they had tried to make a child maintenance arrangement in the past but it had not worked (32 per cent compared to 15 per cent of the Jobcentre Plus group).

**Table 6.6 Reasons why parents are unlikely to make a child maintenance arrangement in the future by route into CM Options**

*Base: All parents with care, without a child maintenance arrangement, and unlikely to make an arrangement in the future at Outcomes interview<sup>44</sup>*

Reason provided	Route into CM Options		
	Jobcentre Plus	General	Total
	%	%	%
Have no contact with ex-partner	32	19	31
Ex-partner objects to paying child maintenance	28	44	30
Ex-partner cannot afford to pay any maintenance	24	22	24
Don't know where ex-partner is living	24	24	24
Do not want any contact with ex-partner	24	19	24
Tried to make an arrangement in the past, but it did not work	15	32	18
Prefer not to receive child maintenance	18	10	17
There is a domestic violence issue	17	10	16
Do not want child to have contact with ex-partner	14	11	13
Other	11	12	11
Ex-partner helps in an informal way	8	11	8
Ex-partner cannot pay for child maintenance	5	1	5
Not sure how to go about setting up a maintenance arrangement	2	2	2
None	1	1	1
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>597</i>	<i>86</i>	<i>684</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>530</i>	<i>117</i>	<i>647</i>

The number of parents who reported that they were unlikely to make an arrangement in the future was found to be too small for comparisons to be made between those on benefits and those not on benefits and the separation types. As such the data has not been commented on here, but is provided in Appendix A for information (Tables A.29 and A.30).

<sup>44</sup> Respondents could give more than one answer to this question therefore column totals do not add up to 100.

## 6.5 Summary

- More than two-fifths of parents did not have a maintenance arrangement at the time of the Outcomes interview (44 per cent). Lack of contact between ex-partners and the non-resident parents and child appeared to be associated with not having an arrangement. Fifty-two per cent of parents without maintenance arrangements were in the 'long-term, bitter' group compared to 32 per cent of those with an arrangement.
- Approximately one in three parents with care without a maintenance arrangement attributed this to their ex-partner being unwilling (29 per cent) or unable (34 per cent) to pay for maintenance, or not knowing where their ex-partner was living (29 per cent).
- Parents who had been referred by Jobcentre Plus were more likely to say the reason for not having an arrangement was due to the level of contact they had with their ex-partner, such as having no contact with their ex-partner (28 per cent compared with 15 per cent of the General group). In comparison, the General group was more likely to have reported that they had tried to make an arrangement in the past, but it had not worked (30 per cent of the General group compared to 22 per cent of the Jobcentre Plus group).
- Parents in the 'long-term, bitter' and 'never in a relationship' groups were more likely to report contact issues with their ex-partner, compared to parents in other groups. For example, 39 per cent of the 'long-term bitter' group and 48 per cent of the 'never in a relationship' group reported not knowing where their ex-partner was living, compared to between six and 12 per cent of the other groups. The more recently separated groups (i.e. the 'recent, friendly, contact' and 'recent, mixed, contact' groups) were more likely to report that their ex-partner was unable to pay maintenance: more than half of these groups (54 per cent and 56 per cent) reported that their ex-partner could not afford to pay maintenance compared to 16 to 44 per cent of the other groups.
- More than two-fifths of parents reported that they were 'not at all likely' to make an arrangement in the future (43 per cent). In comparison, 15 per cent reported they were 'very likely' and 17 per cent that they were 'likely' to do so.
- The length of separation, level of contact between parents and the non-resident parents and child appeared key in how likely parents thought they were to make an arrangement in the future. For example, only 27 per cent of the 'long-term bitter' group and 18 per cent of the 'never in a relationship' group thought they were likely to make an arrangement in the future compared to between a third and a half of other groups of parents.

- The majority of parents who reported being unlikely to make an arrangement in the future attributed it to issues around contact with their ex-partner (for example, 31 per cent reported having no current contact) or their ex-partner being unwilling (30 per cent) or unable (24 per cent) to pay.
- A greater proportion of parents referred by Jobcentre Plus reported being unlikely to make a child maintenance arrangement in the future due to issues of contact with their ex-partner (32 per cent had no current contact, compared with 19 per cent of the General group). The General group were more likely than parents referred by Jobcentre Plus to attribute it to their ex-partner objecting to paying maintenance (44 per cent compared with 28 per cent), or a past arrangement not having worked (32 per cent compared with 15 per cent).

## 7 Measuring the effect of the Child Maintenance Options service

This chapter addresses the main aim of the evaluation: what effect the Child Maintenance Options service (CM Options service) telephone helpline has on parents. More specifically: whether the CM Options service has had any effect on parents' likelihood of making a maintenance arrangement. It starts by describing the way in which the effect of CM Options on parents' maintenance arrangements was assessed using a quasi-experimental design, and then goes on to look at the primary outcome measure: the effect of CM Options on the proportions of parents making maintenance arrangements following contact with the service. The secondary outcomes are then examined: firstly, the effect of CM Options on the type of arrangements parents made and, secondly, whether or not parents made working arrangements. The final part of the chapter looks at the differential effect of the service across different groups of parents. It should be noted that the analysis of effect has only been carried out for the Jobcentre Plus group and not the General group, and does not include users of the website and face-to-face service who have not used the telephone service.

### 7.1 Establishing the effect of the Child Maintenance Options service

This section describes the way in which the analysis of the effect of the CM Options service was carried out.

#### 7.1.1 Identifying a 'comparison' sample

A standard way to assess what effect the CM Options service has on parents would be to compare outcomes for parents using the CM Options service with a suitable comparison group of non-users, i.e. a comparison group would be sought that has the same profile of characteristics as the CM Options service users but who happen not to have used the service. This comparison group would then be used to generate an estimate of the 'counterfactual' for the CM Options service users – that is, what outcomes would have been observed for the CM Options service users if they had not used the service? If outcomes for the user and comparison group differ, this difference can reasonably be attributed to the CM Options service – the size of the difference being a measure of the 'additionality' or 'impact' of the service.

However, for various reasons it did not prove possible to follow this standard approach in the evaluation of the CM Options service primarily because, for data protection and practical reasons,<sup>45</sup> access to a suitable comparison group could not be gained.

Because of this difficulty an estimate has instead been made of the effect the CM Options service has on users by splitting the group of CM Options users into two sub-groups:

- A sub-group of users for whom we believe it is plausible that CM Options would have a moderate to large impact.
- A sub-group of users for whom we believe it is reasonable to assume that the CM Options service would have only a relatively small impact, if any.

The latter of these two groups has been defined as those with a very low level of contact with CM Options: namely survey respondents who do not remember contact with CM Options (15 per cent) and those who reported a call with CM Options of less than one minute and who did not report discussing any topics in their conversation with the service (such as their family circumstances and the child maintenance options available to them: one per cent). This 'low use' group has been used as our comparison group.

The remaining respondents – those that reported having a call with the CM Options service of around five minutes or more, or a call of less than a minute, but who *did* report discussing some topics in their conversation with the service make up the first of the sub-groups described above and are referred to for the rest of the report as the 'moderate to high use' group.

Around 84 per cent of Jobcentre Plus referrals fall into the 'moderate to high use' group, the 'low use' comparison group being made up of the remaining 16 per cent.

What this division means in practice is that the 'low use' group have been used to generate an estimate of the counterfactual for the 'moderate to high use' group. In principle the counterfactual this approximates to is the outcomes that the

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<sup>45</sup> The first approach considered to identify a group of non-users of the CM Options service was to try to make contact with parents who had turned down referral from Jobcentre Plus; but the project team was not able to access these respondents for data protection reasons. The second approach was to identify parents who the CM Options service had called but who were not interested in speaking to the service and, as such, rejected the call. At the beginning of the project, it was believed that the CM Options service recorded calls in this way but, once the project had started, it became apparent that they did not and, as such, it was not possible to identify a group of non-users using this approach.

'moderate to high use' group would have experienced if they had made much less use of CM Options. But with an assumption that the effect of the CM Options service on the 'low use' group is likely to be small, then the 'low use' group should also give a reasonable estimate of the 'non-CM Options' counterfactual, as well. If there were *some* impact on the 'low use' group, this would result in an underestimate of the net impact on the 'moderate to high use' group. Note that this approach also assumes that there is no *negative* impact on the 'low use' group – we believe that this is a reasonable assumption.

### **7.1.2 Matching the user and comparison samples**

For the matched 'low use' comparison group to generate a credible estimate of the counterfactual for the 'moderate to high' use group, it has to be demonstrated that these two groups are very similar in terms of all known predictors of outcomes (such as length of the prior relationship, the prior relationship status (married, cohabiting, or not in a relationship), the quality of the relationship between the two ex-partners, and the degree of contact between the non-resident parent and the child.) But this similarity does not happen naturally – inevitably, the low user group is made up of users who have rather different starting circumstances than the 'moderate to high use' group with, for example, 25 per cent of the 'moderate to high use' group having separated in the previous three months compared to just 18 per cent of the 'low use' group (suggesting that those recently separated are more willing to engage with the service).

To deal with this, the 'low use' comparison group has been matched to the 'moderate to high use' group in terms of all the known predictors of outcomes collected in the survey. The intention is to ensure that the two groups are identical in all matters related to child maintenance with the single exception that the 'moderate to high use' group had a higher level of contact with the CM Options service. Although getting perfect equivalence between the groups is very hard to achieve in practice (probably impossible outside of a randomised controlled trial), the groups can at least be matched on what is known about the members of the two groups. The matching has been done using propensity score matching, with the data on matching being a wide range of information collected during the interviews. For example, a key predictor of parents making a maintenance arrangement is the level of contact between ex-partners. In our 'moderate to high use' group, 33 per cent of parents had contact once a week or more, compared to 27 per cent of the 'low use' group. After matching, the proportion of the 'low use' group where there was contact once a week or more, increased to 34 per cent, not quite a perfect match, but better than before matching. Appendix B has the full list of variables used in the matching and more information about the matching process.

Although this approach works well for the Jobcentre Plus group of parents we have not been able to replicate it for the General group because too few of the General group were low users of the CM Options service (just 37 survey respondents in total). Thus, we were unable to generate a credible comparison group for the General users. **As such the analysis of the effect of the CM Options service has only been carried out on the Jobcentre Plus group of parents**, which at the time of writing made up 70 per cent of the CM Options helpline users.

### 7.1.3 The principal analysis groups

The effect of the CM Options service has been estimated on two key groups of parents.

1. Firstly, the effect has been estimated for all Jobcentre Plus parents, irrespective of whether they had a maintenance arrangement in place at the time of the CM Options call. This means that if there was a greater rate of arrangements in place in the 'moderate to high use' group relative to the matched 'low use' group it can be concluded that this arises *either* because CM Options is successful in helping parents put arrangements in place *or* because CM Options is successful in sustaining or improving existing arrangements. In practice a combination of these two effects might be expected.
2. The main target client group for the CM Options service is, however, those parents without an arrangement in place at the time of the CM Options call. Therefore, the main analysis focuses on the sub-group of Jobcentre Plus referrals who did not have an arrangement in place at the time of the call.<sup>46</sup>

### 7.1.4 The effect of different levels of contact with CM Options

As well as looking at the overall effect of CM Options on parents, the *type* of contact parents had with Options and the effect this had on their maintenance arrangements was also examined. A typology of contact with the service was developed using latent class analysis. This is a statistical method that identifies sub-groups or clusters within data where the members of a cluster are relatively homogenous. In this instance the aim was to identify groups of parents who had a similar 'CM Options experience'. Four groups or clusters were identified:

**Group 1:** This group had a **high level of in-depth, personalised contact** with the CM Options service. They had an above average call length and were likely to

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<sup>46</sup> Note that we do not have definitive data on maintenance arrangements at the time of the Options call and have used an approximation to this group. See Appendix B for more information.



have had multiple calls. They had a very positive reaction to the CM Options service agent (*strongly* agreeing that the call agent had understood their situation and listened to them) and the majority had discussed their family circumstances, their relationship with their ex-partner, and the child maintenance options available to them including private arrangements and the CSA. They were more likely than the other groups to have discussed the barriers to setting up an arrangement. Although the majority had not used the website, a higher proportion compared to the other groups had. They were also more likely than other groups to have been sent and read leaflets following the call. This group represents 27 per cent of the 'moderate to high use' Jobcentre Plus group.

**Group 2:** This group had a **moderate level of in-depth, personalised contact** with CM Options. They had an above average call length and were more likely to have had multiple calls. They had a positive reaction to the CM Options service agent (agreeing that the call agent had understood their situation and listened to them) and during the call most had discussed their family circumstances and their relationship with their ex-partner. A large proportion of them also discussed the child maintenance options available to them, including private arrangements and the CSA. The majority had not used the website, but they were more likely than Groups 3 or 4 to have been sent leaflets which they had read. This group represents 37 per cent of the 'moderate to high use' Jobcentre Plus group.

**Group 3:** This group had a **low to moderate level of personalised** contact with CM Options. The majority had only one shorter call but they did, however, have a very positive experience of the CM Options service call agent (*strongly* agreeing that the call agent had understood their situation and listened to them). Although the majority of them had discussed their family circumstances, they were less likely than Groups 1 and 2 to have discussed their relationship with their ex-partner. The majority of them *had not* discussed the child maintenance options available to them, such as private arrangements and the CSA; or the barriers to making an arrangement. Most had not used the website and were not sent leaflets following the call. This group represents 18 per cent of the 'moderate to high use' Jobcentre Plus group.

**Group 4:** This group had **brief, less personalised contact** with CM Options. Similar to Group 3, most parents had one short call. They had a mixed experience of the call agent (although the majority agreed the call agent had understood their situation and listened to them, there were more negative responses than in the other groups). Only half had discussed their family circumstances and the majority had not discussed the child maintenance options available to them, private arrangements, the CSA or barriers to arrangements. Most had not used the



website and were not sent leaflets following the call. This group also represents 18 per cent of the 'moderate to high use' Jobcentre Plus group.

See Appendix B for more information about these groups.

In principle, it would be expected that, if the CM Options service had a positive effect, all else being equal, the rate at which maintenance arrangements are put in place would decrease across the groups, the highest rate being observed in Group 1, followed by Group 2 and so on, with the lowest rate being observed in the 'low use' comparison group. To test this, the four groups were matched (again using propensity score matching) to ensure a similar profile of parents across the four groups with, in each case, the group being matched so as to give the same profile as the whole of the 'moderate to high' use group. The aim of the matching is to allow for differences between the outcomes for the groups to reasonably be attributed to CM Options (because other observable differences between the groups are removed).

## **7.2 Measuring the effect of the CM Options service on maintenance arrangements**

This section examines the effect of the CM Options service on the primary outcome: whether or not the Jobcentre Plus group of parents have made maintenance arrangements following contact with the service. It starts by looking at the effect for both of the principle analysis groups – all Jobcentre Plus parents and only those without an arrangement at the time of the Options call. It then goes on to look at whether the effect of CM Options differs depending on the *type* of contact parents had.

### **7.2.1 The effect of the CM Options service on maintenance arrangements**

Table 7.1 sets out the maintenance arrangements at the time of the Outcomes interview for all those Jobcentre Plus parents in the 'moderate to high' use group, alongside the matched 'low use' comparison group. As described above, the matched 'low use' comparison group gives the profile of arrangements for Jobcentre Plus parents that we would expect for the 'moderate to high use' group if the CM Options call had not happened (or had been very much shorter).

**Table 7.1 Effect of the CM Options service on maintenance arrangements**

Base: All Jobcentre Plus parents where it was possible to establish maintenance status<sup>47</sup>

Arrangement at Outcomes interview	Moderate to high use group	User group Matched low use comparison group	Percentage point difference
	%	%	(pp)
Arrangement made before CM Options	30	32	-2pp
Arrangement made before CM Options but broken down before Outcomes interview	3	3	0pp
Arrangement made before CM Options but changed after contact with CM Options	2	2	0pp
Arrangement made after contact with CM Options	19	12	+7pp*
No arrangement at time of outcomes interview	46	51	-5pp
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1649</i>	<i>1629</i>	
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1466</i>	<i>284</i>	

\*Asterisked differences are statistically different

The matched low user comparison group column of Table 7.1 suggests that, with only very minimal interaction with CM Options around 12 per cent of Jobcentre Plus clients would have put a maintenance arrangement in place by the point of the Outcomes interview (approximately eight to nine months after contact with CM Options). However, *with* the CM Options service, this percentage is seven percentage points higher at 19 per cent. In other words, for around seven per cent of the ‘moderate to high use’ group of Jobcentre Plus referrals it appears that the CM Options service was instrumental in setting up a maintenance arrangement. The difference is large enough (and the sample sizes large enough) to be statistically significant – that is, a statistical test suggests that a difference of this size is unlikely to have arisen just by chance. The seven percentage point effect of the CM Options service is for those Jobcentre Plus parents in the ‘moderate to high’ use group. The size of the difference for *all* Jobcentre Plus parents using the CM Options service (i.e. including those in the ‘low use’ comparison group) would be slightly lower, at around six percentage points if an assumption is made that the effect of Options on the low use group is zero. As mentioned above this analysis was only carried out on the Jobcentre Plus group of parents, and did not involve the General group; as such it is not possible to extrapolate the findings from this analysis to the General group.

<sup>47</sup> In 111 cases it was not possible to establish the maintenance status of parents for the assessment of effect. For example, where parents could not remember when the arrangement was set up, or where there are complicated family arrangements and it was not possible to establish PWC or NRP status in the interview, or where the reference child changed between the Baseline and the Outcomes interviews.

The findings, however, do not indicate that CM Options prevented existing arrangements from breaking down (the rate of breakdown of an existing arrangement was three per cent in both the CM Options and matched 'low use' comparison group) or on the rate with which existing arrangements are changed (two per cent in both the 'moderate to high use' and matched 'low use' comparison group). This suggests that the effect of CM Options is concentrated amongst those Jobcentre Plus parents without a maintenance arrangement in place at the time of their call, and the subsequent analysis presented in this section focuses on this sub-group.

Table 7.2 repeats the analysis behind Table 7.1 but just for those Jobcentre Plus parents without a maintenance arrangement in place at the time of the CM Options call (this is those parents with no arrangement at the time of the call who had not made one by the time of the Outcomes interview, and parents who had made arrangement following contact with CM Options). This sub-group represents around 64 per cent of all the Jobcentre Plus group<sup>48</sup>.

Table 7.2 suggests that for those without a pre-existing arrangement, around 22 per cent of Jobcentre Plus clients would have put in place an arrangement eight to nine months after contact with CM Options, even with very minimal CM Options involvement. But this percentage rises to 30 per cent with more active CM Options involvement, representing a CM Options effect of around eight percentage points. Small sample sizes mean that, in this case, **this difference is not statistically significantly different from zero but, nevertheless, the eight percentage points represent our best estimate of the effect of CM Options for this group.**<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> The comparison group has been re-matched to the Jobcentre Plus subgroup to ensure the two groups are as closely matched as possible on predictors of maintenance arrangements.

<sup>49</sup> Given that this is essentially a repeat of Table 7.1 the eight percentage points can be seen to be genuine if not statistically significant.

**Table 7.2 Effect of CM Options on arrangements for those without a pre-existing arrangement**

*Base: All Jobcentre Plus parents where it was possible to establish maintenance status<sup>50</sup> who did not have an arrangement at the time of the CM Options call*

	User or comparison group		
	Moderate to high use group	Matched low use comparison group	Percentage point difference
<b>Arrangement at Outcomes interview</b>	%	%	(pp)
Arrangement made after contact with CM Options	30	22	8pp
No arrangement at time of outcomes interview	70	78	-8pp
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1071</i>	<i>1071</i>	
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>973</i>	<i>173</i>	

*Note that no differences in this table were significantly different*

### 7.2.2 The effect of the CM Options service by type of contact

This next section of the chapter presents evidence on how the effect of the CM Options service on maintenance arrangements varies by the type of contact Jobcentre Plus parents had with the service. The four groups described above from the typology of contact with the service (see section 7.1.4) were used to examine whether the effect of the service varied by the type of contact. The four groups were:

- **Group 1:** who had **high level of in-depth, personalised contact** with CM Options.
- **Group 2:** who had a **moderate level of in-depth, personalised contact** with CM Options.
- **Group 3:** had a **low to moderate level of personalised contact**.
- **Group 4:** had **brief less personalised contact**.

As mentioned above, it would be expected that, all else being equal, the level of maintenance arrangements being put in place should decrease across the four groups, with the highest rate in Group 1, then Group 2 and the lowest in the low use comparison group. Table 7.3 below confirms this hypothesis, with the greatest rate of maintenance arrangements being seen for Jobcentre Plus parents in Groups 1 and 2, at 34 per cent and 30 per cent respectively. For those in Group 3, the rate of arrangements is the same as those in the low user comparison group – both 22 per cent, suggesting no effect of CM Options for those in Group 3. For those in Group 4, the rate of maintenance arrangements is actually marginally lower at 21 per cent than in the low user comparison group but given the

<sup>50</sup> As noted previously in 111 cases it was not possible to establish maintenance status.

difference is only one percentage point, at most this should be interpreted as a very small negative impact of CM Options on this group.

**Table 7.3 Effect of CM Options on arrangements for the different user groups: those without a pre-existing arrangement**

*Base: All Jobcentre Plus parents who did not have an arrangement at the time of the CM Options call*

Arrangement at Outcomes interview	Level of contact with CM Options			Brief, less personalised contact	Low use group
	<i>In-depth, personalised contact</i>				
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3		
	%	%	%		
Arrangement made after contact with CM Options	34	30	22	21	22
No arrangement at time of outcomes interview	66	70	78	79	78
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1071</i>	<i>1071</i>	<i>1071</i>	<i>1071</i>	<i>1071</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>274</i>	<i>350</i>	<i>177</i>	<i>172</i>	<i>173</i>

As discussed above, it has not been possible to carry out this analysis on the General group due to the small number of this group falling into the matched low user comparison group. It should be noted, however, that the latent class analysis that identified the typology of contact with the CM Options service, was also carried out on the General group of parents. It was found that the vast majority of the General group had more in-depth personalised contact with the CM Options service, and very few had more limited contact. More than half of the General group fell into Group 1 (55 per cent), 37 per cent into Group 2 and only five and four per cent in Groups 3 and 4 respectively.

### 7.3 Measuring the effect of the CM Options service on the type of maintenance arrangements

Having looked at the primary outcome measure: the effect of the CM Options service on Jobcentre Plus parents making arrangements following contact with CM Options, the chapter now looks at a range of secondary outcome measures. The first secondary outcome to be examined is whether the CM Options service has had any effect on the *types* of arrangement made – so, whether the effect of CM Options is differentially seen on CSA or private arrangements. For all secondary outcomes, the effect on all Jobcentre Plus parents is not examined. Instead the chapter goes straight into looking at the effect on those without maintenance arrangements at the time of the Options call, as this is the main target group for the CM Options service. Firstly the effect on Jobcentre Plus parents without arrangements at the time of the CM Options call is examined, followed by how the

effect of the service varies by the type of contact parents have had with CM Options.

### **7.3.1 The effect of CM Options on the types of arrangements made**

Table 7.4 shows the maintenance arrangements at the time of the Outcomes interview for Jobcentre Plus parents without an arrangement at the time of the CM Options call. Parents in the 'moderate to high' use group are shown alongside the matched 'low use' comparison group. Parents who had made arrangements following contact with the CM Options service are shown split by the three different types of arrangement: CSA arrangements, private arrangements, and court arrangements. The matched low user comparison group gives the profile of types of arrangements that could be expected for the moderate to high user group of Jobcentre Plus parents if the CM Options call had not happened (or had been very much shorter). Table 7.4 suggests that with only very minimal contact with CM Options, seven per cent of parents without maintenance arrangements at the time of the CM Options call would have made an arrangement through the CSA and 14 per cent would have made a private arrangement by the point of the Outcomes interview. But with moderate to high use of the CM Options service, 11 per cent of Jobcentre Plus parents made a CSA arrangement and 18 per cent a private arrangement: a difference of four percentage points for each type of arrangement. On a statistical test **these differences are not significantly different from zero**, probably due to the small sample sizes, but nonetheless the four percentage points represent our best estimate of effect sizes for CSA and private arrangements.

**Table 7.4 Effect of CM Options on types of arrangements for those without a pre-existing arrangement**

*Base: All Jobcentre Plus parents where it was possible to establish maintenance status and type<sup>51</sup> who did not have an arrangement at the time of the CM Options call*

Arrangement at Outcomes interview	User or comparison group		Percentage point difference
	Moderate to high use group	Matched low use comparison group	
	%	%	(pp)
<i>Arrangements made after contact with CM Options:</i>			
CSA arrangement made after contact with CM Options	11	7	+4pp
Private arrangement made after contact with CM Options	18	14	+4pp
Court arrangement made after contact with CM Options	1	1	0pp
No arrangement at time of outcomes interview <sup>52</sup>	70	79	-9pp
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1071</i>	<i>1065</i>	
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>973</i>	<i>172</i>	

*Note that no differences in this table were significant*

### 7.3.2 The effect of the CM Options service on the types of arrangements made by the type of contact

This section looks at how the effect of the CM Options service on the type of arrangements Jobcentre Plus parents made following contact, varies by the type of contact they had with the service. It uses the four groups described in section 7.1.4 to examine how different levels and types of contact effect types of arrangement. Groups 1 and 2 had a higher level of in-depth personalised contact with the CM Options service whereas Groups 3 and 4 had briefer, less personalised contact.

Table 7.5 shows the effect of the service on the types of arrangements made by the four groups of Jobcentre Plus parents. It appears that the effect of the CM Options service on parents making arrangements through the CSA or making private arrangements is concentrated in Groups 1 and 2: nine per cent of Group 1 and 13 per cent of Group 2 had a CSA arrangement compared to only seven per cent of the matched low user comparison group. The effect for Jobcentre Plus

<sup>51</sup> As noted previously in 111 cases it was not possible to establish maintenance status.

<sup>52</sup> The percentages in Table 7.4 for those with no arrangement are slightly different to those in Table 7.2 as there were a small number of parents who did not know what type of arrangement they had and as such could not be included in this analysis, which has reduced the base sizes and affected the percentages very slightly. As such the proportion of parents with no arrangement should be taken from Table 5.2, rather than this table.

parents in Groups 3 and 4 appears to be neutral: five per cent of Group 3 and seven per cent of Group 4 had a CSA arrangement following contact with CM Options.

In terms of private arrangements, it appears that the effect of the CM Options service was also focused on parents who had had the highest level of in-depth personalised contact with the service, with 24 per cent of Group 1 and 17 per cent of Group 2 having made private arrangements compared to 14 per cent of the comparison 'low use' group. In Groups 3 and 4 there appears to be a neutral effect of CM Options: 14 per cent of Group 3 and 13 per cent of Group 4 had made private arrangements following CM Options contact compared to 14 per cent of parent in the 'low use' group.

**Table 7.5 Effect of CM Options on arrangements for the different user groups: those without a pre-existing arrangement**

*Base: All Jobcentre Plus parents who did not have an arrangement at the time of the CM Options call, where it was possible to establish maintenance status and type*

Arrangement at Outcomes interview	Level of contact with CM Options				
	In-depth, personalised contact		Brief, less personalised contact		
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Low use group
	%	%	%	%	%
<i>Arrangements made after contact with CM Options:</i>					
CSA arrangement made after contact with CM Options	9	13	5	7	7
Private arrangement made after contact with CM Options	24	17	14	13	14
Court arrangement made after contact with CM Options	1	0	3	1	1
No arrangement at time of outcomes interview	66	70	78	79	79
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1071</i>	<i>1071</i>	<i>1071</i>	<i>1071</i>	<i>1065</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>274</i>	<i>350</i>	<i>177</i>	<i>172</i>	<i>172</i>

## 7.4 The effect of the CM Options service on whether arrangements are working

This next section looks at the effect of the CM Options service on the next of the secondary outcomes: whether the arrangements Jobcentre Plus parents make after contact with Options are 'working' arrangements. The definition of a 'working' arrangement is described in detail in Chapter 5 but can be summarised as:



- a CSA arrangement where some amount is paid, always or usually on time;
- a private financial arrangement where some amount is paid, always or usually on time, or a private non-financial arrangement that is always or usually adhered to; or
- a court arrangement where some amount is paid, always or usually on time.

This section looks first at the effect of CM Options on working arrangements for all Jobcentre Plus parents without an arrangement at the time of the Options call. The differential effect of types of contact with service is then considered.

#### 7.4.1 The effect of CM Options on working arrangements

Table 7.6 shows the maintenance arrangements at the time of the Outcomes interview for Jobcentre Plus parents in the 'moderate to high use' group who did not have an arrangement at the time of the CM Options call, alongside the matched low user comparison group. The first two rows show the proportions of parents who had made arrangements following contact with CM Options split by whether the arrangement has been classified as working or non-working.

As previously, the matched low user comparison group gives the profile of working arrangements that could be expected for the 'moderate to high use' group of Jobcentre Plus parents, if the CM Options call had not happened (or had been very much shorter).

Table 7.6 suggests that the CM Options service had an effect on setting up both working and non-working arrangements for the 'moderate to high use' group, with an apparently slightly greater effect on working arrangements.

The 'low use' comparison group suggests that with only very minimal interaction with CM Options, around 11 per cent of Jobcentre Plus parents without arrangements at the time of the CM Options call would have made a working arrangement by the point of the Outcomes interview. The 'moderate to high use' column suggests that with moderate to high use of CM Options 18 per cent of Jobcentre Plus parents would have made a working arrangement.

The effect of CM Options on making a non-working arrangement is somewhat smaller in percentage point terms than the effect on making a working arrangement: six per cent of Jobcentre Plus parents in the comparison group would have made a non-working arrangement by the Outcomes interview compared with ten per cent of parents in the user group. **The differences are not**

significant but nonetheless are our best estimate of the effect of CM Options on working and non-working arrangements.

**Table 7.6 Effect of CM Options on working arrangements for those without a pre-existing arrangement**

*Base: All Jobcentre Plus parents where it was possible to establish working status who did not have an arrangement at the time of the CM Options call*

Arrangement at Outcomes interview	User group		Percentage point difference (pp)
	Moderate to high use group	Matched low use comparison group	
	%	%	
<i>Arrangements made after contact with CM Options:</i>			
Working arrangement	18	11	+7
Non-working arrangement	10	6	+4
No arrangement at time of outcomes interview	72	82	-10
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1040</i>	<i>1020</i>	
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>945</i>	<i>165</i>	

*Note that no differences in this table were significant*

#### 7.4.2 The effect of the CM Options service on working arrangements by the type of contact

The section now turns to the question of how the effect of the CM Options service on working status varies by the type of contact Jobcentre Plus parents have with the service, using the four matched user groups described in section 7.1.4. As mentioned previously, we would expect there to be a higher rate of working arrangements being put in place for those in Groups 1 and 2 than for those in Groups 3 and 4, because of the more in-depth and personalised contact the former groups had with the CM Options service.

Table 7.7 supports this with the greatest rate of working arrangements being seen for Jobcentre Plus parents in Groups 1 and 2, at 20 per cent and 18 per cent respectively. Those in Group 3 and Group 4 still have a higher rate of working arrangements (13 per cent and 12 per cent) than the 'low use' comparison group (11 per cent) but the effect size of the CM Options service is, as expected, much smaller for these users. A similar pattern can be seen looking at non-working arrangements: those in Groups 1 and 2 have higher rates of non-working arrangements than those in Groups 3 and 4. For example, whereas six per cent of the 'low use' comparison group have a non-working arrangement by the Outcomes stage, 11 per cent of Group 1 and ten per cent of Group 2 have a non-working arrangement at this stage.

**Table 7.7 Effect of CM Options on working arrangements for the different user groups: those without a pre-existing arrangement**

*Base: All Jobcentre Plus parents who did not have an arrangement at the time of the CM Options call*

Arrangement at Outcomes interview	Level of contact with CM Options				Low use group
	<i>In-depth, personalised contact</i> Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	<i>Brief, less personalised contact</i> Group 4	
	%	%	%	%	%
Working arrangement	20	18	13	12	11
Non-working arrangement	11	10	6	8	6
No arrangement <sup>53</sup>	68	73	81	80	82
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1033</i>	<i>1034</i>	<i>1028</i>	<i>1064</i>	<i>1020</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>265</i>	<i>337</i>	<i>173</i>	<i>170</i>	<i>165</i>

## 7.5 Variations in the effect of CM Options across subgroups

The analysis presented above describes the overall, or average, effect of CM Options on Jobcentre Plus parents. Additional statistical analysis was undertaken to establish whether there is any evidence that this average effect differs for different groups of parents<sup>54</sup>. This analysis did not uncover any significant variation by socio-demographic indicators, but did generate evidence that CM Options is effective only for parents who are still in contact with their ex-partner. For those parents not in contact there is no evidence that CM Options helps parents put arrangements in place.

Table 7.8 illustrates this. It compares the percentages making an arrangement after contact with CM Options for the ‘moderate to high use’ group relative to the matched ‘low use’ comparison group, by a binary measure of contact: contact at least once a year, and ‘no contact’. The former group includes parents with a range of levels of contact with their ex-partner from every day to once a year, but could not be further sub-divided because of small sample sizes.

<sup>53</sup> The percentages in Table 7.7 for those with no arrangement are slightly different to those in Table 7.3 as there were a small number of parents who did not know the compliance of the arrangement they had and as such could not be included in this analysis, which has reduced the base sizes and affected the percentages very slightly. As such the proportion of parents with no arrangement should be taken from Table 7.3, rather than this table.

<sup>54</sup> This analysis was based on a logistic regression analysis with the outcome variable being whether or not an arrangement was made after CM Options, and the predictors being the known predictors of the outcome (that is, all the variables used in the propensity score matching – see Appendix B) and their interactions with the binary ‘use of CM Options’ variable. A significant interaction term was taken as evidence of differential CM Options effect. This is arguably not as robust as propensity score matching and needs more assumptions about the relationship between the various predictors of outcomes, but the alternative of undertaking separate propensity score matching across a very wide range of sub-groups was not feasible because of the small sample sizes involved.

- For those in contact with their ex-partner (once a year or more), for those with moderate to high contact with CM Options the percentage of parents making arrangements after CM Options is 45 per cent. This is considerably higher than the 29 per cent that we estimate would have made arrangements without CM Options and making the difference for this 'contact' group 16 percentage points. This is a statistically significant difference.
- For those with no contact with their ex-partner, those making moderate to high use of CM Options were no more likely to make an arrangement afterwards (13 per cent) than their matched comparison group (15 per cent). This represents a small, negative, effect size of two percentage points, but is not statistically significant.

This analysis suggests that CM Options can assist in making arrangements if there is some existing contact between ex-partners. But, in instances where there is no such contact, the CM Options service appears not to have been sufficient to make a difference.

**Table 7.8 Effect of CM Options on arrangements for those without a pre-existing arrangement, for those with different levels of contact with their ex-partner**

*Base: All Jobcentre Plus parents where it was possible to establish maintenance status<sup>55</sup> who did not have an arrangement at the time of the Options call*

% of parents making arrangement after contact with CM Options	User or comparison group		
	Moderate to high use group	Matched low use comparison group	Percentage point difference
Frequency of contact with ex-partner	%	%	(pp)
At least once a year	45	29	16pp*
No contact	13	15	-2pp
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>			
At least once a year	581	523	
No contact	486	548	
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>			
At least once a year	530	83	
No contact	439	89	

\*Asterisked differences are statistically different

<sup>55</sup> As noted previously in 111 cases it was not possible to establish maintenance status.

## 7.6 Summary

- The effect of the service could not be established using standard quasi-experimental methods, because no practical means was found of identifying a suitable non-user comparison group. Instead, the effect of the service was estimated by comparing the rate of maintenance arrangements for Jobcentre Plus referrals making 'moderate to high' use of the service to the rate of arrangements for Jobcentre Plus referrals making only minimal use of the service. The latter group was judged to give a reasonable proxy to the rate of arrangements that would have been made in the absence of the service. That is, the 'low use' group were used as a proxy for a standard non-user comparison group.
- It was not possible to replicate the analysis of effect for the General group as too few made minimal use of the service to be able to generate a credible comparison group. As such this analysis was carried out only on the Jobcentre Plus group, which at the time of writing made up 70 per cent of the users of the CM Options service telephone helpline.
- In terms of the primary outcome measure for this evaluation: the effect of the CM Options service telephone helpline on parents making maintenance arrangements, it was found that around seven per cent of Jobcentre Plus parents in the 'moderate to high use' group (excluding those in the 'low use' group) had an arrangement in place eight to nine months after their contact with CM Options who would otherwise have not. When looking only at parents who did not have a maintenance arrangement at the time of the CM Options call this difference is eight percentage points. The effect of the CM Options service is concentrated amongst Jobcentre Plus parents in groups with a higher level of in-depth personalised contact with the CM Options service helpline: Groups 1 and 2.
- This effect was found in both the types of arrangements Jobcentre Plus parents were making, and whether or not arrangements were working. Around four per cent of the 'moderate to high use' group (excluding those in the 'low use' group) had made a CSA arrangement, and another four per cent a private arrangement, eight to nine months after their contact with the CM Options service who would otherwise have not made one. Furthermore, approximately seven per cent of Jobcentre Plus parents in the 'moderate to high' use group had a working arrangement and four per cent had a non-working arrangement, which they would not have otherwise had. The effect of the service on types of arrangement and working arrangements appeared to again be concentrated in Groups 1 and 2.

- Additional analysis found that whilst there were no differential effects of CM Options for different socio-demographic groups of parents, the service appears to have only been effective for parents in contact with their ex-partner. For those who had some contact with their ex-partner the effect was 16 percentage points, whereas for those without contact there was a very slightly negative effect of CM Options of two percentage points.

# 8 Conclusions

## 8.1 Summary

### 8.1.1 Parents who use the CM Options service

The sample for the survey reported on here was drawn between February and September 2009 with interviews being carried out between May 2009 and June 2010. The statistics presented in the report therefore reflect the profile of users and the nature of the service at that time. The sample was drawn from users of the CM Options telephone helpline and did not include users of the website or the face-to-face service who have not used the telephone helpline.

Users of the CM Options service were on the whole lone mothers from low income households. The vast majority of parents who used the CM Options service were parents with care, with a small minority of non-resident parents. Most were lone parents, and more than half were in a lone parent non-working household. Parents typically had an income of less than £20,000 per annum, and more than half were claiming a low income benefit.

Whilst it is important to understand the demographic and economic characteristics of parents using the CM Options service, these data only provide a partial picture of users of the CM Options service. A typology of separated parents was developed taking into account a number of key variables known to be associated with the making of maintenance arrangements, such as the length and status of the previous relationship, the nature of the separation and more recent relationship between ex-partners, the level of contact between the non-resident parent and child, and the time since separation. Using latent class analysis, a model with five different groups of separated families was identified.

The five groups that emerged from the analysis can be described as follows.

- The largest group, who made up two-fifths of the sample, were parents who had been separated for some time, had a bitter separation, with little or no contact between ex-partners or the non-resident parent and the child. They are referred to in the report as the '**long-term, bitter**' group. These parents tended to be older than the other groups, and have more children. They were also more likely than other groups to be male and from an Asian ethnic group (although the majority were White and female).
- The next largest group of parents, around a fifth of the sample, were those that had been separated for a moderate to long period of time and who had a

range of experiences with regards to the acrimony of the separation and quality of current relationship between parents. There was some less frequent contact between ex-partners and the non-resident parent and child for this group. This group are referred to in the report as the '**medium-term, contact**' group. They were more likely to have re-partnered than other groups, but there were no other clear socio-demographic differences.

- The next two groups are slightly smaller, and are both characterised as parents who were more recently separated and with regular contact between the parents and the non-resident parents and children. They were also more likely to be lone parents than the other groups. There were clear differences between these two groups, however, with a '**recent, friendly, contact**' group being characterised as having had a less bitter separation, and a more amiable relationship between parents currently, and being more likely to be benefit claimants. They were also more likely to have fewer and younger children. The second group, labelled, '**recent, mixed, contact**' group were more likely to have had an acrimonious separation, and the majority of them did not have a friendly relationship with their ex-partner at the time of the survey. This group included more General group parents relative to the other groups. They were also more likely to be male (though the majority were female) and lone parents. This group had the lowest proportion of benefit claimants and ethnic minorities.
- The smallest, yet quite distinct group, making up only four per cent of all parents, were those parents who were **not in a relationship** with the other parent of the child at the time the child was conceived. For this group of parents there tended to be very little or no contact between ex-partners, or between the non-resident parent and the child(ren). They were characterised by having a higher proportion of benefit claimants than other groups, tending to have a lower income and fewer children and a higher proportion of them were Black (though like other groups the majority were White).

Separated families' situations are undoubtedly more complex than can be portrayed through a typology like this. Nonetheless it provides a useful insight into the different groups of parents using the CM Options service and helps provide an understanding of how parents' family situations affect their use of the service and the decisions they make about maintenance.

As we noted above, the sample for the survey reported on here was drawn between February and September 2009, with interviews being carried out between May 2009 and June 2010. At the time of sampling, the majority of parents who used the CM Options service came into contact with it following a referral from Jobcentre Plus, with a minority, the 'General' group, coming into contact through



other routes, such as referral from another government agency or contacting the CM Options service direct after seeing advertising. Although the relative proportions of Jobcentre Plus and General group clients has now shifted so that a slightly larger percentage belong to the General group, CM Options service Management Information data from 2010 shows the profile of parents within the two groups to have stayed largely the same. So there is reason to believe that the statistics we present in the report on the two groups are broadly applicable to more recent users of the CM Options service, though it is worth noting that the service has undergone changes since the survey was carried out.

### **8.1.2 How parents use the CM Options service**

Most parents who came into contact with the CM Options service used it as a one-off service and not to provide ongoing information and support. The sample was drawn from parents who had been in contact with the CM Options service, although a significant minority of parents could not remember this contact. All parents who could remember CM Options contact had used the telephone support service, with the website being used by only a minority of these parents. Parents were generally positive about their experience of using the CM Options service, with most parents saying they found the service helpful, and only a small minority not finding it helpful.

Contact with the telephone service, for most parents, was a short to moderate length call (between five and 30 minutes long), where they discussed a range of topics such as their family circumstances, their relationship with their ex-partner and the different possibilities available to them in terms of child maintenance. The key differences between groups of parents in terms of how they used the service were apparent when looking at the types of topics discussed. Those parents where there was little or no contact between ex-partners, the 'long-term, bitter' group and the 'never in a relationship' group, were less likely to discuss making a private arrangement, whilst the 'recent, friendly, contact' group were less likely to have discussed making an arrangement through the CSA. This suggests that parents are able to tailor the conversations they have with the CM Options service to their individual needs and circumstances. So, for example, where making a private arrangement would be likely to be very difficult, i.e. in situations where there is little or no contact between parents, a smaller proportion of parents reported having discussed this type of arrangement. In addition, in situations where parents have a good quality of relationship between ex-partners and there is regular contact, and they are thus more likely to be able to come to a suitable arrangement without the involvement of a third party, the calls were less likely to involve a discussion of the CSA.

There were also clear differences between the General group and the Jobcentre Plus group in terms of how they used the CM Options service. Whilst all of the Jobcentre Plus group were called by the CM Options service (following referral from the Jobcentre Plus), the majority of the General group called the CM Options service themselves, and this is evident in the way they used the service, with the General group tending to be more proactive and engaged. They tended to have longer calls, and were more likely to report discussing all of the different topics asked about in the interview. They were also more likely to have used the service more than once, to have used the website, and to report finding the service helpful.

### **8.1.3 Maintenance arrangements**

At the time of the second interview, eight to nine months after contact with the CM Options service, around half of parents had a maintenance arrangement in place. Nearly a third of these arrangements had been set up before the CM Options call. Of those arrangements that were made following the CM Options contact, most were made in the two to four months after that contact. Private arrangements were the most common type of arrangement, held by more than half of parents with arrangements, with a slightly smaller proportion of parents having used the CSA to make an arrangement.

Looking at whether or not parents have an arrangement is a fairly rudimentary way to understand the dynamics of parents' maintenance arrangements. A slightly more useful approach is to consider whether arrangements are 'working' or 'effective'. The Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission defines an 'effective' arrangement as a statutory arrangement that has produced an amount payable which is being paid consistently, or a private arrangement where both parents have agreed the form of the arrangement and are complying with it (Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission, 2009). It was not possible to replicate this definition in the survey because we could not establish whether both parents had agreed to the arrangement (because only one parent was interviewed). Therefore, the definition of a 'working' or 'effective' arrangement that has been used in this study, is simply a self-reported working arrangement<sup>56</sup>. Nearly two-thirds of parents with arrangements eight to nine months after their CM Options call had a working arrangement, whilst just more than one-third did not.

Another, more subjective way, to consider the success of a maintenance arrangement is to consider parents' views of the arrangement, and two

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<sup>56</sup> For the purposes of this report a working arrangement is classified as a CSA arrangement or private financial arrangement or court arrangement where some amount is paid, always or usually on time, or a private non-financial arrangement that is usually or always adhered to.

approaches were used to look at parents' perspectives of their arrangements. Parents with an arrangement were asked how fair they thought their arrangement was, and all parents were asked how happy they were with the maintenance and financial arrangements they had with their ex-partner, regardless of whether they had a child maintenance arrangement. More than half of parents with arrangements thought they were fair, and there were similar proportions of parents who were happy with their maintenance and financial situations (two-fifths) as there were who were unhappy.

More than two-fifths of parents did not have maintenance arrangements at the time of the last interview, eight to nine months after contact with the CM Options service. The reasons parents with care gave for not having an arrangement most frequently related to their ex-partner not being willing or able to pay for maintenance, or not knowing where their ex-partner was. Whilst a third of those without maintenance said they might make an arrangement in the future, over half thought that this was unlikely. The most commonly given reasons for being unlikely to make an arrangement in the future, again related to the ex-partner not being willing or able to pay, or not knowing where the ex-partner was. Interestingly, a quarter of parents without a maintenance arrangement were happy with their maintenance situations, despite not having an arrangement in place.

As well as using the CM Options service differently, there were clear differences between the Jobcentre Plus and General group in terms of maintenance arrangements. Although similar proportions of them had arrangements that were set up before contact with the CM Options service, the General group were much more likely to have made an arrangement following contact with CM Options than the Jobcentre Plus group. Whilst it is not possible to conclude that the arrangements made by the General group were made as a result of their contact with the CM Options service, their greater rate of setting up arrangements fits in with their more proactive and engaged use of the service, suggesting that this group were more motivated to make arrangements, or in a better position to be able to make use of the service. In terms of the types of arrangements made, the General group were more likely to have made an arrangement using the CSA, whilst the Jobcentre Plus group were more likely to have made a private arrangement. Although the percentage of the General group making arrangements was greater, they tended to be less satisfied with their arrangements: they were less likely to think their arrangements were fair, and were less likely to be happy with their maintenance situations than the Jobcentre Plus group.

We know from Chapter 3 that in the General group the relationship between ex-partners is more likely to be difficult – for example, a relatively high proportion of the General group fall into the group ‘recent, mixed, contact’, with members of this group being characterised as having had an acrimonious separation and, whilst there was regular contact, this tended to be less friendly than for other groups. In accordance with this, parents without maintenance arrangements in the General group were more likely to give reasons suggesting a conflicted relationship with their ex-partner, such as their ex-partner objects to paying maintenance, or they had tried in the past but the arrangement had not worked. This possibly more hostile relationship between parents fits in with this group being less satisfied with maintenance, and more likely to use the CSA, yet their proactive use of the CM Options service and their greater rate of setting up arrangements suggests that they are also a more motivated group in terms of maintenance, compared to Jobcentre Plus referrals.

The Jobcentre Plus group, on the other hand, as well as making less proactive use of the CM Options service, appeared to be less motivated to make an arrangement. They were less likely to have an arrangement prior to their CM Options call, or to have made one following their CM Options contact, than the General group. However, the barriers to maintenance appear to be different for the Jobcentre Plus group and some of these parents may in fact be in a better position to be able to set up maintenance. For example, there was a higher proportion of Jobcentre Plus referrals in the ‘recent, friendly, contact’ group, nearly all of whom had relatively amiable relationships with their ex-partner and regular contact. On the other hand, there was also a higher proportion of Jobcentre Plus parents in the ‘never in a relationship’ group, most of whom had very little contact with the other parent of their child, and the reasons the Jobcentre Plus group gave for not having arrangements were more likely to relate to lack of contact with their ex-partner. In terms of the types of arrangements they did make, they were more likely to make private arrangements and tended to be more likely to think their arrangement was fair, and were also more likely to be happy with their maintenance situation (regardless of whether they had an arrangement or not).

There were also clear differences in the maintenance situations of the different ‘separation types’ of parents, with parents who had an acrimonious separation some time ago and who had little or no contact with their ex-partner, and those who were never in a relationship with the other parent of their child, appearing to face the most barriers in terms of maintenance. Parents that had regular, amiable contact, and who were recently separated, on the other hand, appeared to be in a much better situation with regards to maintenance. Parents in the ‘recent, friendly, contact’ group were most likely to have a maintenance arrangement and those in

the 'recent, mixed, contact' group were more likely than others to have made an arrangement following contact with CM Options. Parents in the 'long-term, bitter' and the 'never in a relationship' groups were the least likely to have made an arrangement or to have made one following contact with the service. In terms of parents who had maintenance arrangements, the 'recent, friendly, contact' group were much more likely to have a private arrangement, to think their arrangement was fair and were more likely to have a working arrangement. Whereas the 'long-term, bitter' group were more likely to have used the CSA to make an arrangement, were least likely to think their arrangement was fair and were also most likely to have a non-working arrangement. Of those that did not have a maintenance arrangement, the 'long-term, bitter' group and the 'never in a relationship' group were more likely to cite barriers to maintenance to do with lack of contact with their ex-partner, such as not knowing where they are, or not having or wanting any contact. These groups were also the least likely to think it would be possible for them to make an arrangement in the future.

#### **8.1.4 The effect of the CM Options service on parents**

The effect of the CM Options service was measured using a quasi-experimental design, by comparing a matched sample of Jobcentre Plus parents<sup>57</sup> with no or very limited interaction with the CM Options service (the matched 'low use' comparison group) to parents who had more substantial contact (the 'moderate to high use' group). The outcomes for the matched low user comparison group were used to estimate the counterfactual for the 'moderate to high use' group i.e. what would have happened in terms of maintenance should they have had no, or very limited, contact with the CM Options service. In order to ensure any differences in terms of maintenance between the two groups were not caused by other factors, the 'low use' group and the 'moderate to high use' group were matched on a range of factors known to predict maintenance, using propensity score matching.

In addition to measuring the overall effect of the service, it was also possible to look at the effect of the service on those *within* the 'moderate to high use' group. This was done by creating a typology of ways of using the CM Options service using latent class analysis. Four groups were identified in this analysis with a broad hierarchy in terms of the level of contact each group had with the CM Options service.

- Group 1 had a high **level of in-depth personalised contact** with the CM Options service, typified by a greater number of longer calls, a very positive reaction to the call agent, and being likely to have discussed a wide range of topics with regards to child maintenance.

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<sup>57</sup> It was not possible to carry out the analysis of effect on the General group of parents.

- Group 2 had a **moderate level of in-depth personalised contact** with CM Options. They had an above average call length, a positive reaction to the call agent and a large proportion of them had discussed a range of issues relating to child maintenance.
- Group 3 had a **low to moderate level of personalised contact** with the service. They tended to only have one shorter call and to have discussed fewer topics with regards to child maintenance, but had a very positive reaction to the call agent.
- Group 4 had **brief, less personalised contact** with the CM Options service, typified by one, short call, and a limited discussion of child maintenance issues. They had a more mixed experience of the call agent.

The effect of the CM Options service was measured across a range of outcome measures. The primary outcome was whether the parent had an arrangement in place around nine months after their contact with the CM Options service. The secondary outcomes were: type of arrangement (private and CSA) and whether arrangements were working.

In terms of the primary outcome we estimate that approximately seven per cent of Jobcentre Plus parents in the 'moderate to high use' group had a maintenance arrangement following their contact with the CM Options service that they otherwise would not have had. However, this effect was only found amongst those parents who had the most in-depth and personalised contact with the CM Options service - Groups 1 and 2 and those parents where there was contact with the ex-partner. There was no apparent CM Options effect on parents in Groups 3 and 4, or where there was no contact between ex-partners.

In terms of secondary outcomes the effect of the service appears to be broadly similar on both of the main types of arrangement: arrangements through the CSA and private arrangements, with an increase in both these types of arrangements being observed. Some of these additional arrangements were working, some non-working, although there is some evidence that the CM Options service helps to ensure arrangements are working.

It was not possible to replicate the analysis of effect for the General group as too few made minimal use of the service to be able to generate a credible comparison group. The effect of the CM Options telephone service has only been established for Jobcentre Plus referrals, which at the time of writing made up 70 per cent of the users of the service.



### 8.1.5 Non-resident parents

Non-resident parents made up a small, but distinct minority of CM Options service users; in total four per cent of respondents were classified as non-resident parents (that is the parent who the child lives with for less than half the time). Non-resident parents were distinct from parents with care in a range of ways including their socio-demographic profiles, the maintenance arrangements they had in place and the additional support they provided.

Non-resident parents differed in their characteristics from parents with care, tending to be male, older, have a resident partner and be more financially secure (that is more likely to be in a working household, less likely to have an annual income lower than £20,000 and less likely to be claiming a low income benefit).

In terms of relationships with their ex-partner and child, non-resident parents seemed to have better relationships, or at least reported having better relationships with their ex-partner and more contact with their child than the parents with care reported.

There was little difference between non-resident parents and parents with care in terms of usage of the CM Options service. However, non-resident parents were more likely to report using the CM Options service website at both the Baseline and the Outcomes interview.

Non-resident parents were much more likely to have a child maintenance arrangement in place at the time of the CM Options call and the Outcomes interview. Having a working maintenance arrangement was also more common amongst non-resident parents than parents with care.

With regards to additional support provided outside of child maintenance, non-resident parents who had a private arrangement with their ex-partner were more likely to report providing additional support compared with the proportion of parents with care reporting this.

### 8.1.6 Conclusions

The aim of the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission is '*To ensure that the maximum number of children who live apart from one or both parents benefit from an effective maintenance arrangement*' (Child Maintenance and Other Payments Act 2008, Part 1, clause 2(1)). This study suggests that the Child Maintenance Options service does help to achieve this aim, for parents referred by Jobcentre Plus at least, and the effect of the service is not minor considering the intensity of intervention, with most parents having one or two short telephone

calls. The effect of the service is to increase the percentage of Jobcentre Plus parents with a maintenance arrangement by about seven percentage points, with increases in both private arrangements and arrangements through the CSA. The CM Options service is most effective for those parents who have the most in-depth and personalised contact with the service and for parents where there is contact between ex-partners, with no effect apparent for those with a briefer, less personalised type of contact or those with no contact with their ex-partner.

More than two-fifths of parents who had some contact with CM Options did not have a maintenance arrangement eight to nine months after contact. This study suggests that at least some of these parents might be in a situation where they do not face too many barriers to making an arrangement – for example, the groups of parents who are more recently separated and where there is regular contact, but who do not currently have an arrangement: the fifth of parents without arrangements in the ‘recent, friendly, contact’ and the ‘recent, mixed, contact’ groups; or the third of parents without arrangements who think they are likely or very likely to make an arrangement in the future. Among the group of parents without arrangements after CM Options service contact, the findings suggest there are a substantial portion who would find it difficult to make arrangements – for example, parents where there is no contact with their ex-partner, the ‘long-term, bitter’ group who make up half of those without arrangements and the ‘never in a relationship’ group at nine per cent, or the six in ten parents without arrangements who think they are unlikely to make one in the future.



## A Additional tables

**Table A.1 Household status, by parental status**

Base: All parents at Outcomes interview<sup>58</sup>

Household status	Parental status		Total	%
	Parent with care	Non-resident parent		
	%	%		%
Couple family	12	23		13
Lone parent	88	77		87
Weighted base	2583	110		2766
Unweighted base	2547	140		2766

**Table A.2 Age of child, by parental status**

Base: All parents at Outcomes interview<sup>59</sup>

Age of children	Parental status		Total	%
	Parent with care	Non-resident parent		
	%	%		%
Has child aged 0 to 5	55	41		55
Has child aged 6 to 11	46	50		46
Has child aged 12 to 16	35	44		35
Has child aged 17 to 18	11	12		11
Weighted base	2583	110		2766
Unweighted base	2547	140		2766

**Table A.3 Low income benefit status, by route into CM Options**

Base: All parents at Outcomes interview

Benefit status	Route into CM Options		Total	%
	Jobcentre Plus	General		
	%	%		%
Claims low income benefits	60	31		53
Does not claim low income benefits	40	69		47
Weighted base	2130	637		2766
Unweighted base	1860	906		2766

<sup>58</sup> Parents who were classified as having a shared care arrangement, or where it was not possible to determine their status, have not been presented in this table due to small base sizes, but they have been included in the percentages in the total column.

<sup>59</sup> Parents who were classified as having a shared care arrangement, or where it was not possible to determine their status, have not been presented in this table due to small base sizes, but they have been included in the percentages in the total column...

**Table A.4 Level of contact between non-resident parent and child, by benefit status***Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

<b>Contact between NRP and child</b>	<b>Benefit status</b>				<b>Total</b>
	Jobcentre Plus + benefits	Jobcentre Plus no benefits	General + benefits	General no benefits	
	%	%	%	%	
NRP has contact with child	67	64	61	73	67
NRP does not have contact with child	33	36	39	27	33
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1268</i>	<i>851</i>	<i>198</i>	<i>423</i>	<i>2739</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1125</i>	<i>723</i>	<i>269</i>	<i>618</i>	<i>2735</i>

**Table A.5 Age of respondent at Outcomes interview, by separation type***Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

<b>Age of respondent</b>	<b>Separation type</b>					<b>Total</b>
	Long-term, bitter	Medium- term, contact	Recent, friendly, contact	Recent, mixed, contact	Never in a relationship	
	%	%	%	%	%	
Under 20	1	1	2	+	1	1
20 to 25	12	13	28	12	26	16
26 to 30	15	23	18	17	14	18
31 to 35	17	15	20	18	12	17
36 to 40	22	17	18	21	23	20
41 to 45	18	19	7	21	12	17
46 to 50	9	10	5	8	8	8
51+	5	2	2	3	4	4
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1121</i>	<i>583</i>	<i>451</i>	<i>437</i>	<i>133</i>	<i>2725</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1109</i>	<i>580</i>	<i>443</i>	<i>487</i>	<i>109</i>	<i>2728</i>

**Table A.6 Call length at Baseline, by benefit status**

Base: All parents at Outcomes interview who remember contact at Baseline interview

	Benefit status				Total
	Jobcentre Plus + benefits	Jobcentre Plus no benefits	General + benefits	General no benefits	
Length of call	%	%	%	%	%
1 minute or less	5	5	2	+	4
Around 5 to 10 minutes	49	52	28	37	46
Around 15 to 30 minutes	36	35	49	50	39
45 minutes or more	9	8	22	13	11
Weighted base	1064	688	186	415	2353
Unweighted base	962	601	256	611	2431

**Table A.7 Private arrangement topics discussed at Baseline, by route into CM Options**

Base: Parents who discussed private arrangements in CM Options call, at Baseline interview<sup>60</sup>

	Route into CM Options		Total
	Jobcentre Plus	General	
Topics discussed	%	%	%
Discussed how to negotiate with ex-partner	56	55	56
Discussed how to work out amount of maintenance	44	60	49
Discussed how to record private arrangement	41	44	42
Weighted base for negotiate	919	407	1326
Unweighted base for negotiate	824	628	1452
Weighted base for amount	923	406	1328
Unweighted base for amount	828	629	1457
Weighted base for record	909	4043	1313
Unweighted base for record	819	625	1444

<sup>60</sup> Respondents could give more than one answer to this question therefore column totals do not add up to 100.

**Table A.8 CSA arrangement topics discussed at Baseline, by separation type**

Base: Parents who discussed CSA arrangements in CM Options call, at Baseline interview<sup>61</sup>

Topics discussed	Separation type					Total %
	Long-term, bitter %	Medium-term, contact %	Recent, friendly, contact %	Recent, mixed, contact %	Never in a relation-ship %	
Discussed how CSA calculate amount of maintenance	51	51	64	54	[30]	52
Discussed what the CSA can do for you	73	72	78	68	[68]	72
Discussed how CSA enforce payment	56	57	65	55	[50]	57
Weighted base for calculate	593	313	185	240	47	1379
Unweighted base for calculate	621	339	199	277	43	1479
Weighted base for what CSA can do	607	323	186	243	52	1411
Unweighted base for what CSA can do	627	344	200	279	47	1497
Weighted base for enforce	608	327	183	240	51	1409
Unweighted base for enforce	630	349	198	279	46	1502

**Table A.9 Whether followed up signposting at Baseline, by benefit status**

Base: All parents at Outcomes interview who remembered contact at Baseline interview

Whether followed up signposting	Benefit status				Total %
	Jobcentre Plus + benefits %	Jobcentre Plus no benefits %	General + benefits %	General no benefits %	
Not signposted	58	62	55	49	57
Signposted not followed up	36	30	27	31	33
Signposted and followed up	6	8	18	21	10
Weighted base	1026	674	177	403	2280
Unweighted base	930	586	247	594	2357

<sup>61</sup> Respondents could give more than one answer to this question therefore column totals do not add up to 100.

**Table A.10 Whether signposted at Baseline, by separation type**

Base: All parents at Outcomes interview who can remember contact at Baseline interview

Whether signposted	Separation type					Total
	Long-term, bitter	Medium-term, contact	Recent, friendly, contact	Recent, mixed, contact	Never in a relationship	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Not signposted	59	60	55	49	66	57
Signposted not followed up	31	30	39	34	41	33
Signposted and followed up	10	10	6	17	3	10
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>928</i>	<i>495</i>	<i>378</i>	<i>364</i>	<i>114</i>	<i>2280</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>949</i>	<i>510</i>	<i>392</i>	<i>415</i>	<i>91</i>	<i>2357</i>

**Table A.11 Private arrangement topics discussed at Outcomes, by route into CM Options**

Base: Parents who discussed private arrangements in CM Options call, at Outcomes interview<sup>62</sup>

Topics discussed	Route into CM Options		Total
	Jobcentre Plus	General	
	%	%	%
Discussed how to negotiate with ex-partner	68	69	68
Discussed how to work out amount of maintenance	49	68	56
Discussed how to record private arrangement	36	42	38
<i>Weighted base for negotiate</i>	<i>76</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>119</i>
<i>Unweighted base for negotiate</i>	<i>71</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>140</i>
<i>Weighted base for amount</i>	<i>73</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>115</i>
<i>Unweighted base for amount</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>137</i>
<i>Weighted base for record</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>116</i>
<i>Unweighted base for record</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>135</i>

<sup>62</sup> Respondents could give more than one answer to this question therefore column totals do not add up to 100.

**Table A.12 CSA arrangement topics discussed at Outcomes, by route into CM Options**

Base: Parents who discussed CSA arrangements in CM Options call, at Outcomes interview<sup>63</sup>

Topics discussed	Route into CM Options		Total
	Jobcentre Plus	General	
	%	%	%
Discussed how CSA calculate amount of maintenance	50	57	52
Discussed what the CSA can do for you	76	82	78
Discussed how CSA enforce payment	60	61	60
<i>Weighted base for calculate</i>	<i>105</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>162</i>
<i>Unweighted base for calculate</i>	<i>93</i>	<i>86</i>	<i>179</i>
<i>Weighted base for what CSA can do</i>	<i>107</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>170</i>
<i>Unweighted base for what CSA can do</i>	<i>94</i>	<i>91</i>	<i>185</i>
<i>Weighted base for enforce</i>	<i>107</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>169</i>
<i>Unweighted base for enforce</i>	<i>94</i>	<i>89</i>	<i>183</i>

**Table A.13 Pattern of telephone use, by route into CM Options**

Base: All parents at Outcomes interview

Type of contact	Route into CM Options		Total
	Jobcentre Plus	General	
	%	%	%
Baseline only	76	81	78
Outcomes only	1	1	1
Both stages	7	13	8
No contact	16	5	13
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>2113</i>	<i>635</i>	<i>2748</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1848</i>	<i>904</i>	<i>2752</i>

<sup>63</sup> Respondents could give more than one answer to this question therefore column totals do not add up to 100.

**Table A.14 Whether parents had looked at the website at Baseline, by benefit status***Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

<b>Whether looked at the website at Baseline</b>	<b>Benefit status</b>				<b>Total</b>
	Jobcentre Plus + benefits	Jobcentre Plus no benefits	General + benefits	General no benefits	
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	7	9	22	39	14
No	93	91	78	61	86
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1064</i>	<i>686</i>	<i>186</i>	<i>414</i>	<i>2351</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>964</i>	<i>599</i>	<i>257</i>	<i>610</i>	<i>2430</i>

**Table A.15 Whether parents used the website at Baseline, by parental status***Base: All parents at Outcomes interview<sup>64</sup>*

<b>Whether used website at Baseline</b>	<b>Parental status</b>		<b>Total</b>
	Parent with care	Non-resident parent	
	%	%	%
Yes	13	35	15
No	87	65	85
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>2185</i>	<i>96</i>	<i>2351</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>2222</i>	<i>124</i>	<i>2430</i>

<sup>64</sup> Parents who were classified as having a shared care arrangement, or where it was not possible to determine their status, have not been presented in this table due to small base sizes, but they have been included in the percentages in the total column.

**Table A.16 Where parent found website address, at Baseline**

Base: All parents at Outcomes interview who has used the website at the Baseline interview<sup>65</sup>

Source of website address	Total %
On another website	29
Someone from the CM Options phone line	18
Jobcentre Plus	12
CSA	8
Friends or family	8
On an advert	7
On a leaflet or poster	7
A letter from the CM Options service	7
Community or legal advice or information	4
Other source	14
<i>Weighted base</i>	339
<i>Unweighted base</i>	410

**Table A.17 Whether parents had looked at the website at Outcomes, by route into CM Options**

Base: All parents at Outcomes interview

Whether looked at website	Route into CM Options		Total
	Jobcentre Plus %	General %	
Yes	7	11	8
No	93	89	92
<i>Weighted base</i>	2127	635	2762
<i>Unweighted base</i>	1857	905	2762

**Table A.18 Whether parents used the website at Outcomes, by parental status**

Base: All parents at Outcomes interview<sup>66</sup>

Whether used website at Outcomes	Parental status		Total
	Parent with care %	Non-resident parent %	
Yes	8	15	8
No	92	85	92
<i>Weighted base</i>	2564	112	2762
<i>Unweighted base</i>	2525	140	2762

<sup>65</sup> Respondents could give more than one answer to this question therefore column totals do not add up to 100.

<sup>66</sup> Parents who were classified as having a shared care arrangement, or where it was not possible to determine their status, have not been presented in this table due to small base sizes, but they have been included in the percentages in the total column.



**Table A.19 Where parent found website address, at Outcomes**

Base: All parents who has used the website at the Outcomes interview<sup>67</sup>

Source of website address	Total %
Jobcentre Plus	24
Search engine	19
Letter from CM Options service	11
CM Options service phone-line	11
CSA	9
Friends or family	8
Another website	7
Advert	6
Leaflet or poster elsewhere	6
Community or legal advice	1
Leaflet or poster in GP surgery	+
Other	13
<i>Weighted base</i>	216
<i>Unweighted base</i>	236

**Table A.20 Pattern of website use, by route into CM Options**

Base: All parents at Outcomes interview

Type of contact	Route into CM Options		Total
	Jobcentre Plus %	General %	
Baseline only	5	26	10
Outcomes only	6	5	6
Both stages	1	6	2
No contact	88	63	82
<i>Weighted base</i>	2125	635	2760
<i>Unweighted base</i>	1856	905	2761

<sup>67</sup> Respondents could give more than one answer to this question therefore column totals do not add up to 100.

**Table A.21 Maintenance arrangements at Outcomes, by benefit status***Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

	Benefit status				Total
	Jobcentre Plus + benefits	Jobcentre Plus no benefits	General + benefits	General no benefits	
	%	%	%	%	%
Arrangement	49	55	63	76	56
No arrangement	51	45	37	24	44
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1240</i>	<i>832</i>	<i>191</i>	<i>425</i>	<i>2689</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1103</i>	<i>706</i>	<i>260</i>	<i>618</i>	<i>2687</i>

**Table A.22 Types of maintenance arrangement at Outcomes, by benefit status***Base: All parents with an arrangement at the Outcomes interview*

	Benefit status				Total
	Jobcentre Plus + benefits	Jobcentre Plus no benefits	General + benefits	General no benefits	
	%	%	%	%	%
Statutory arrangement (CSA)	29	44	61	50	41
Private arrangement	69	51	39	47	56
Court arrangement	2	5	0	3	3
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>610</i>	<i>453</i>	<i>121</i>	<i>322</i>	<i>1506</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>528</i>	<i>375</i>	<i>154</i>	<i>478</i>	<i>1535</i>

**Table A.23 Type of working arrangements, by parental status***Base: All parents with working or non-working arrangements<sup>68</sup>*

Type of arrangement	Parental status		Total
	Parent with care	Non-resident parent	
	%	%	%
Working arrangement	63	89	64
Non-working arrangement	37	11	36
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1332</i>	<i>79</i>	<i>1423</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1329</i>	<i>106</i>	<i>1447</i>

<sup>68</sup> Parents who were classified as having a shared care arrangement, or where it was not possible to determine their status, have not been presented in this table due to small base sizes, but they have been included in the percentages in the total column.

**Table A.24 Type of working arrangements at Outcomes, by route into CM Options***Base: All parents with working or non-working arrangements*

Type of arrangement	Route into CM Options		Total
	Jobcentre Plus	General	
	%	%	%
Working arrangement	66	61	64
Non-working arrangement	34	39	36
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1006</i>	<i>417</i>	<i>1423</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>862</i>	<i>585</i>	<i>1447</i>

**Table A.25 Annual amount of maintenance***Base: All parents with working or non-working arrangements<sup>69</sup>*

Annual amount of maintenance	Working arrangements		Total
	Working arrangement	Non-working arrangement	
	%	%	%
£500 or less	18	24	20
£501 to £1000	13	15	13
£1001 to £2000	38	32	36
£2001 to £3000	19	14	18
£3001 to £4000	5	9	6
£4001 or more	7	6	6
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>776</i>	<i>404</i>	<i>1180</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>773</i>	<i>413</i>	<i>1186</i>

<sup>69</sup> This analysis does not include arrangements which were classified as 'other financial arrangements' for the reason noted above, nor does it include non-financial private arrangements as these were and arrangement for non-monetary support (such as childcare).

**Table A.26 Fairness of arrangements, by benefit status**

*Base: All parents with an arrangement at Outcomes who indicated the fairness of their arrangement*

Fairness of arrangements	Benefit status				Total
	Jobcentre Plus + benefits	Jobcentre Plus no benefits	General + benefits	General no benefits	
	%	%	%	%	%
Very fair	30	24	22	18	25
Quite fair	41	32	40	35	37
Not very fair	12	18	18	17	15
Not at all fair	17	26	20	31	23
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>555</i>	<i>411</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>294</i>	<i>1380</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>473</i>	<i>343</i>	<i>152</i>	<i>417</i>	<i>1385</i>

**Table A.27 Happiness with maintenance situation, by benefit status**

*Base: All parents at Outcomes interview*

Happiness with maintenance situation	Benefit status				Total
	Jobcentre Plus + benefits	Jobcentre Plus no benefits	General + benefits	General no benefits	
	%	%	%	%	%
Very happy	20	16	10	12	17
Fairly happy	23	20	27	23	23
Neither	16	19	14	15	17
Not very happy	14	17	14	17	16
Very unhappy	26	28	35	32	28
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1246</i>	<i>834</i>	<i>197</i>	<i>432</i>	<i>2709</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1105</i>	<i>708</i>	<i>268</i>	<i>624</i>	<i>2705</i>

**Table A.28 Reasons for not having a maintenance arrangement, by benefit status (parents with care)**

Base: All parents with care, without a child maintenance arrangement at Outcomes interview<sup>70</sup>

Reason provided	Benefit status				Total
	Jobcentre Plus + benefits	Jobcentre Plus no benefits	General + benefits	General no benefits	
	%	%	%	%	%
Ex-partner cannot afford to pay any maintenance	33	36	23	43	34
Don't know where ex-partner is living	29	30	32	15	29
Ex-partner objects to paying child maintenance	26	29	49	39	29
Have no contact with ex-partner	28	28	16	15	26
Do not want any contact with ex-partner	25	27	16	14	24
Tried to make an arrangement in the past, but it did not work	20	24	35	26	23
There is a domestic violence issue	19	15	15	23	18
Not made one yet, but plan to in the future	17	14	20	13	16
Have not yet decided what to do about child maintenance	14	11	13	20	13
Prefer not to receive child maintenance	14	13	5	3	12
Do not want child to have contact with ex-partner	11	15	7	9	12
Ex-partner helps in an informal way	11	8	6	19	10
Ex-partner cannot pay for child maintenance	2	4	1	0	2
Other reason	1	2	3	2	2
None	3	3	4	8	3
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>561</i>	<i>322</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>67</i>	<i>1000</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>510</i>	<i>280</i>	<i>79</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>969</i>

<sup>70</sup> Respondents could give more than one answer to this question therefore column totals do not add up to 100.

**Table A.29 Reasons why parents are unlikely to make a child maintenance arrangement in the future, by benefit status**

Base: All parents with care, without a child maintenance arrangement, and unlikely to make an arrangement in the future at Outcomes interview<sup>71</sup>

Reasons provided	Benefit status				Total
	Jobcentre Plus + benefits	Jobcentre Plus no benefits	General + benefits	General no benefits	
	%	%	%	%	%
Have no contact with ex-partner	33	32	[26]	14	31
Ex-partner objects to paying child maintenance	27	30	[53]	39	30
Ex-partner cannot afford to pay any maintenance	22	26	[15]	26	24
Don't know where ex-partner is living	26	22	[33]	19	24
Do not want any contact with ex-partner	23	26	[16]	21	24
Tried to make an arrangement in the past, but it did not work	13	19	[30]	33	18
Prefer not to receive child maintenance	17	18	[7]	12	17
There is a domestic violence issue	18	15	[4]	14	16
Do not want your child to have contact with ex-partner	12	16	[14]	10	13
Ex-partner helps in an informal way	10	5	[6]	14	8
Ex-partner cannot pay for child maintenance	7	2	[0]	1	5
Not sure how to go about setting up a maintenance arrangement, but it did not work	2	3	[1]	2	2
Other reason	12	10	[9]	13	11
None	+	2	[3]	0	1
<i>Weighted base</i>	358	239	33	53	684
<i>Unweighted base</i>	325	205	48	69	647

<sup>71</sup> Respondents could give more than one answer to this question therefore column totals do not add up to 100.

**Table A.30 Reasons why parents are unlikely to make a child maintenance arrangement in the future, by separation type**

*Base: All parents with care, without a child maintenance arrangement, and unlikely to make an arrangement in the future at Outcomes interview<sup>72</sup>*

Reasons provided	Separation types					Total
	Long-term, bitter	Medium-term, contact	Recent, friendly, contact	Recent, mixed, contact	Never in a relationship	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Have no contact with ex-partner	39	13	[4]	[5]	46	31
Ex-partner objects to paying child maintenance	31	37	[13]	[44]	15	30
Ex-partner cannot afford to pay any maintenance	20	28	[34]	[47]	16	24
Don't know where ex-partner is living	28	11	[3]	[5]	49	24
Do not want any contact with ex-partner	28	11	[0]	[7]	45	24
Tried to make an arrangement in the past, but it did not work	20	14	[3]	[14]	20	18
Prefer not to receive child maintenance	17	21	[20]	[4]	16	17
There is a domestic violence issue	22	7	[0]	[10]	10	16
Do not want child to have contact with ex-partner	16	5	[0]	[2]	26	13
Ex-partner helps in an informal way	3	12	[41]	[17]	2	8
Other	11	19	[8]	[5]	9	11
Ex-partner cannot pay for child maintenance	6	2	[0]	[2]	5	5
Not sure how to go about setting up a maintenance arrangement, but it did not work	3	3	[+]	[2]	0	2
None	+	1	[8]	[0]	0	1
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>406</i>	<i>110</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>73</i>	<i>684</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>382</i>	<i>110</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>647</i>

<sup>72</sup> Respondents could give more than one answer to this question therefore column totals do not add up to 100.

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## **B Technical Appendix**

### **B.1 Methodology**

#### **B.1.1 Questionnaire summary**

The questionnaires were developed by NatCen through liaison with the Commission. The Baseline interview, which took place two to four months following CM Options service contact, collected background information about the parent including: separation information, their use and view of the CM Options service and any child maintenance arrangements. This was followed by an Outcomes interview eight to nine months following the CM Options service contact which collected information about current maintenance arrangements and any demographic changes. The Baseline interview lasted on average 20 minutes and the Outcomes interview lasted on average 14 minutes.

The Baseline interview began by checking recall of CM Options service contact and collecting information about the respondent, their children and any resident partners they had. The next section examined the respondents' experience and views of the CM Options service. The third section examined whether there were any child maintenance arrangements in place and the nature of them, whether arrangements were working and the fairness of these arrangements. It also asked about any other financial support provided, and the helpfulness of CM Options in setting up their arrangements. The penultimate section looked at the frequency and type of contact between the child and the non-resident parent and also the contact between the respondent and their ex-partner. The final section gathered demographic information about the working status and employment of the respondent and any resident partner, income, education, ethnicity and disability.

The Outcomes interview followed a similar structure checking initially for changes to the household structure and then asking about whether there had been further contact with the CM Options service since the Baseline interview. The next section looked at what child maintenance arrangements were in place six months after the Baseline interview and collected information about any new or changed arrangements. The penultimate section looked at the frequency and type of contact between the child and the non-resident parent at the Outcomes stage and also the contact between the respondent and their ex-partner. The final section gathered demographic information where there had been changes since the Baseline interview.



In both questionnaires many questions were asked of all parents, but throughout the questionnaire they were routed to different questions according to whether they were a parent with care, a non-resident parent or whether they had a shared care arrangement.

The interviews were conducted over the phone, using computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI), programmed using Blaise.

### **B.1.2 Pilots**

Sections of the draft questionnaire were cognitively tested with a group of parents who had used the CM Options service. The recommendations from the cognitive pilot led to changes in the language used in some questions. Both the Baseline and the Outcomes questionnaires were tested through a pilot stage using a full CATI program and all field materials. At the Baseline pilot stage 52 parents were interviewed, the parents who agreed to be re-contacted were followed up at the Outcomes pilot and 33 interviews were completed.

At both stages the feedback was positive, with most parents happy to take part, although the questionnaire was revised in line with the interviewers' comments, which allowed improvements to the interview computer program and the accompanying documents.

At the Baseline and the Outcomes pilot, interviewers were briefed and debriefed in person by the research team, and interviewers completed an evaluation form, where they were asked to summarise their experiences or raise any particular problems encountered during fieldwork. These forms were used as the basis for discussion at the debriefings.

### **B.1.3 Questionnaire content**

#### **Baseline questionnaire**

MODULE A	Screen and family information <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Check recall of CM Options service contact</li><li>• Check whether respondent has been in contact with CSA</li><li>• Number of children (residential and non-residential)</li><li>• Name, age, residence and other parent of all children</li><li>• Whether any current resident partner</li><li>• Name and age of partner</li></ul>
MODULE B	Experience and views of the CM Options service <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nature of contact with the CM Options service (number and length of calls)</li></ul>

- Mode of contact with the CM Options service and how found out about it if inbound call
- Views on the CM Options service call agent
- Selection of reference child
- Topics discussed with the CM Options service
- Use of the website
- Whether or not they will contact CM Options in the future and whether they would recommend CM Options to a friend

#### MODULE C

##### Child maintenance arrangements

- Whether any formal child maintenance arrangement currently:
  - Nature of the child maintenance arrangement
  - Compliance with the child maintenance arrangement and views on fairness
  - Reason for no arrangement and whether likely to make an arrangement in the future
- Whether any other financial support is provided apart from child maintenance:
  - Whether this is part of an arrangement
  - Compliance with other financial support
  - Views on fairness of other financial support
- Helpfulness of CM Options in making a child maintenance arrangement or other financial arrangement

#### MODULE D

##### Current contact and relationship overview

- Frequency and type of contact between child and non-resident parent
- Extent of shared decision making
- Decision making balance between parent with care and non-resident parent
- Whether the care and contact arrangements are part of an agreement between parents
  - Compliance with this arrangement
- Previous relationship status, length of relationship, bitterness of separation
- Frequency and friendliness of contact between parents
- Whether financial matters is discussed with ex-partner and whether this is a cause of tension

#### MODULE E

##### Demographics

- Working status and employment of respondent
- Working status and employment of resident partner
- Sources of income and amount of income
- Education, ethnicity and disability of respondent
- Permission to link survey data to Management Information
- Permission to re-contact respondent for follow up interview
- Permission to link survey data to CSA administrative records

## Outcomes questionnaire

- MODULE F                      Screen and family information
- Check recall of previous interview
  - Check for changes in the family structure
  - Check for changes in the relationship with respondent and resident partner
  - Whether any new resident partner
- MODULE G                      Experience and views of the CM Options service
- Check whether there has been any contact with the CM Options service since Baseline interview:
    - Reason for contact
    - Nature of contact (number and length of calls)
    - Date of most recent contact
    - Views on the CM Options service call agent
    - Topics discussed
    - Use of the website
    - Use of the face-to-face service
  - Selection of reference child
  - Other sources of information and support used in relation to child maintenance
  - Whether or not they will contact CM Options in the future and whether they would recommend CM Options to a friend
- MODULE H                      Child maintenance arrangements
- Whether any formal child maintenance arrangement currently (whether same as Baseline, changed from Baseline or new). If changed or new arrangement:
    - Nature of the child maintenance arrangement
    - Compliance with the child maintenance arrangement and views on fairness
    - Reason for no arrangement and whether likely to make an arrangement in the future
    - Whether there has been an arrangement which has broken down between Baseline and Outcomes
  - Whether any other financial support is provided apart from child maintenance:
    - Whether this is part of an arrangement
    - Compliance with other financial support
    - Views on fairness of other financial support
  - Helpfulness of CM Options in making a child maintenance arrangement or other financial arrangement
- MODULE I                      Current contact and relationship overview
- Frequency and type of contact between child and non-resident parent
  - Extent of shared decision making
  - Decision-making balance between parent with care and non-resident parent
  - Whether there is a care and contact arrangement in place between parents
    - Compliance with this arrangement
    - Whether there has been an arrangement which has broken down between Baseline and Outcomes
  - Frequency and friendliness of contact between parents
  - Whether financial matters is discussed with ex-partner and whether this is a

cause of tension

#### MODULE J

##### Demographics

- Working status and employment of respondent, if changed
- Working status and employment of resident partner, if changed
- Sources of income and amount of income, if changed
- Permission to re-contact for further research
- Permission to use data for secondary research

#### **B.1.4 Child selection**

Family circumstances can be complex and parents may have more than one child with more than one ex-partner, and indeed, more than one maintenance arrangement. For each interview one 'reference' child was selected to ask detailed maintenance and contact questions about.

Children were deemed as 'relevant' for selection if they were:

- Aged 15 or under, or 16 to 19 and in full-time education (based on the Commission's age criteria for child maintenance);
- Living with one of their parents for more than 50 per cent of the time;
- Discussed by the respondent parent with the CM Options service, or part of a general discussion with the CM Options service;
- Their other parent was known, alive and eligible to pay or receive child maintenance at the time of the interview.

Where the children fitted these criteria they were marked as 'relevant' and then the computer program compiled a list of the names of the other parents of these children, from which it randomly selected one to talk about in the rest of the interview.

All respondents were told which child and ex-partner the questions would ask about in the rest of the interview, and the names of the child and ex-partner were used throughout the interview to ensure respondents were clear who was being referred to.

At the Outcomes stage the same reference child was kept where possible; if there had been changes which meant that this was not possible and there had been further contact with the CM Options service, another child was selected. Where there had been changes and no contact with the CM Options service the interview was terminated.

### **B.1.5 Contacting respondents**

The sample was drawn from the Commission's Management Information records and interviewers had a contact telephone number for named individuals. The named individual from the sample was the person listed having been in contact with the CM Options service. Interviewers had to interview the named individual and could not interview anyone else in the household. All interviews were conducted by NatCen telephone unit interviewers.

Each sampled individual received an opt-out letter introducing the survey and was allowed at least two weeks to opt-out. Only cases where the respondent did not opt out at this stage were issued for Baseline interview.

Six months after the Baseline interview all respondents who had completed an initial interview and agreed to be re-contacted were sent an advance letter informing them that they would shortly be contacted to participate in a follow-up interview: the Outcomes interview. Respondents were given a form to return to NatCen if their contact details had changed since the Baseline interview.

### **B.1.6 Briefing**

All interviewers attended a half-day briefing on the project before starting fieldwork, led by the NatCen research team. Interviewers also had comprehensive project instructions covering all aspects of the briefing.

Briefing sessions provided an introduction to the study and its aims, an explanation of the sample and contact procedures, full definitions of the different sample groups and two dummy interview scenarios designed to familiarise interviewers with the questions and flow of the interview.

### **B.1.7 Coding and editing**

The computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) program ensures that the correct routing is followed throughout the questionnaire, and applies range and consistency error checks. These checks allow interviewers to clarify and query any data discrepancies directly with the respondent. A separate 'in-house' editing process was also used, which covered some of the more complex data checking, combined with the coding process for open answers.

Following briefings by the NatCen research team, the data was coded by a team of coders under the management of the NatCen Operations team, using a second version of the CATI program which included additional checks and codes for open answers. 'Other specify' questions are used when respondents volunteer an

alternative response to the pre-coded choice offered to them. These questions were back-coded to the original list of pre-coded responses where possible (using a new set of variables rather than overwriting interviewer coding). Notes made by interviewers during interviews were also examined and the data amended if appropriate, ensuring high quality data. Queries and difficulties that could not be resolved by the coder or the team were referred to researchers for resolution.

In the course of each interview, where a respondent gave details of current or recent spells of employment, this information was coded to be consistent with Standard Industrial and Occupational classifications – NS-SEC and SOC (2000).

Once the data set was clean, the analysis file of question-based and derived variables was set up in SPSS, and all questions and answer codes labelled.

#### **B.1.8 Representativeness of the data**

Table B.1 shows a comparison of the relationship profile of the parents who were included in the study sample with that of more recent users of the CM Options service, who used the service between March 1<sup>st</sup> and May 31<sup>st</sup> 2010. The comparison is based on Management Information (MI) data and was performed to see whether there have been many changes in the nature of CM Options users between sampling and more recently, and hence whether the findings in this report are relevant to more recent users of the service. The two groups were broadly similar, for example, in the sample population 91 per cent of parents were parents with care and 90 per cent of the more recent MI population were parents with care. However, there are some differences, for example, whereas 32 per cent of the sample parents reported never being in contact with their ex-partner, the proportion was higher at 38 per cent for the recent population group.

Despite the small differences between the groups, the fact that the data was mainly similar means that the data collected by this study is reasonably representative and of more recent CM Options service users.

**Table B.1 Comparison of MI data from sample and recent MI population**

*Base: Parents included in the study sample and parents in contact with the CM Options service between 1<sup>st</sup> March and 31<sup>st</sup> May 2010*

	MI data from sample	Group Data from 2010 users of CM Options	Total
	%	%	%
<i>Who was in contact with CM Options service</i>			
Parent with care	91	90	90
Non-resident parent	8	8	8
Third party	1	2	2
<i>Relationship status at time of CM Options service contact</i>			
Separated	94	93	93
Never together	4	5	5
Not separated	1	2	2
Do not want to say	+	+	+
<i>How often in contact with ex-partner</i>			
Never	32	38	38
Every day	9	9	9
At least once a week	37	31	31
At least once a month	14	12	12
Few times a year	6	9	8
Once a year or less	2	2	2
<i>Nature of break-up</i>			
Very friendly	2	1	1
Quite friendly	19	17	17
Neither	27	24	25
Not very friendly	26	30	30
Not at all friendly	24	24	24
Never a couple	3	3	3
<i>Nature of current relationship</i>			
Very friendly	2	2	2
Quite friendly	22	19	19
Neither	24	22	22
Not very friendly	19	18	18
Not at all friendly	11	9	9
No contact	21	30	29
<i>Weighted base for who in contact</i>	<i>1707</i>	<i>28966</i>	<i>30673</i>
<i>Unweighted base for who in contact</i>	<i>1707</i>	<i>28966</i>	<i>30673</i>
<i>Weighted base for relationship status</i>	<i>1544</i>	<i>26552</i>	<i>28096</i>

<i>Unweighted base for relationship status</i>	1544	26552	28096
<i>Weighted base for contact with ex-partner</i>	1425	20191	21616
<i>Unweighted base for contact with ex-partner</i>	1425	20191	21616
<i>Weighted base for break-up</i>	1188	16274	17462
<i>Unweighted base for break-up</i>	1188	16274	17462
<i>Weighted base for current relationship</i>	1573	22103	23676
<i>Unweighted base for current relationship</i>	1573	22103	23676

## B.2 Response Rates

As fieldwork was split into two distinct six-month periods of Baseline and Outcomes, the response rates have been presented separately.

### Response rate at Baseline

Table B.2 below shows the response rate for the whole of the Baseline stage of fieldwork. Fieldwork for the Baseline stage started on the 19<sup>th</sup> May 2009 and finished on the 15<sup>th</sup> December 2009.

The Baseline stage had six tranches of fieldwork each of which lasted four weeks with a two-week mop-up period. Of the 10,587 cases issued, in total 4454 productive interviews were achieved. The achieved response rate is 74 per cent of in-scope cases or 42 per cent of all cases covered.

**Table B.2 Response rate for all cases at Baseline**

	N	Selected %	Issued %	Covered %	In scope %
<b>Selected</b>	10587				
<i>Missing addresses</i>		0			
<i>Opt-outs</i>	56	1			
<i>Late opt-outs</i>	6	0			
<b>Total opted out</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>1</b>			
<b>Not opted out</b>	<b>10525</b>	<b>99</b>			
<i>Broken appointment</i>	0			0	
<i>Other unproductive</i>	1212			12	
<i>No direct contact: 15+ calls</i>	1930			18	
<i>Ineligible</i>	404			4	
<i>Disconnected numbers</i>	970			9	
<b>In scope</b>	<b>6009</b>			<b>57</b>	
<i>Refusals</i>	1555			15	26
<i>Direct contact: ring back</i>	0			0	0
<i>Direct contact: appointment</i>	0			0	0
<i>Fully productive</i>	4400			42	73
<i>Partially productive</i>	54			1	1
<b>Total productive</b>	<b>4454</b>			<b>42</b>	<b>74</b>



The response rate for the Baseline stage is shown broken down by Jobcentre Plus (Table B.3) and General group cases (Table B.4). The response rates for the Jobcentre Plus group and the General group were similar at 72 per cent and 78 per cent of the in-scope sample respectively (which equates to 40 per cent and 49 per cent of the covered sample).

**Table B.3 Response rate for all Jobcentre Plus group at Baseline**

	N	Selected %	Issued %	Covered %	In scope %
<b>Issued cases</b>	<b>7828</b>				
<i>Late opt-outs</i>	3	0			
<b>Total opted out</b>	<b>3</b>	0			
<b>Not opted out</b>	<b>7825</b>	100			
<i>Broken appointment</i>	0			0	
<i>Other unproductive</i>	914			12	
<i>No direct contact: 15+ calls</i>	1562			20	
<i>Ineligible</i>	299			4	
<i>Disconnected numbers</i>	721			9	
<b>In scope</b>	<b>4329</b>			<b>55</b>	
<i>Refusals</i>	1193			15	28
<i>Direct contact: ring back</i>	0			0	0
<i>Direct contact: appointment</i>	0			0	0
<i>Fully productive</i>	3093			40	71
<i>Partially productive</i>	43			1	1
<b>Total productive</b>	<b>3136</b>			<b>40</b>	<b>72</b>

**Table B.4 Response rate for all General group at Baseline**

	N	Selected %	Issued %	Covered %	In scope %
<b>Issued cases</b>	2703				
<i>Late opt-outs</i>	3	0			
<b>Total opted out</b>	<b>3</b>	0			
<b>Not opted out</b>	<b>2700</b>	100			
<i>Outstanding</i>	0		0		
<b>Covered</b>	<b>2700</b>		100		
<i>Broken appointment</i>	0			0	
<i>Other unproductive</i>	298			11	
<i>No direct contact: 15+ calls</i>	368			14	
<i>Ineligible</i>	105			4	
<i>Disconnected numbers</i>	249			9	
<b>In scope</b>	<b>1680</b>			<b>62</b>	
<i>Refusals</i>	362			13	22
<i>Direct contact: ring back</i>	0			0	0
<i>Direct contact: appointment</i>	0			0	0
<i>Fully productive</i>	1307			48	78
<i>Partially productive</i>	11			0	1
<b>Total productive</b>	<b>1318</b>			<b>49</b>	<b>78</b>

### Response rate at Outcomes

Table B.5 below shows the response rate for the whole of the Outcomes stage of fieldwork. The Outcomes stage of fieldwork consisted of follow-up interviews with all Baseline respondents who agreed to be re-contacted for a second interview. Fieldwork for the Outcomes stage started on the 19<sup>th</sup> November 2009 and finished on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2010.

As with the Baseline stage of fieldwork, the Outcomes stage had six tranches of fieldwork each of which lasted four weeks with a two-week mop-up period. These tranches of fieldwork were started six months after the end of the corresponding Baseline fieldwork tranche.

Of the 4237 productive cases which agreed to be re-contacted following the Baseline interview, 4165 cases were issued for interview at Outcomes. This is due to some cases having to be deleted due to problems in the interview, such as routing errors, or accidental interviewing of an ineligible respondent or later withdrawal of the respondent.

In total 2767 productive interviews were achieved. The achieved response rate is 91 per cent of in-scope cases or 66 per cent of all cases covered.

**Table B.5 Response rate for all cases at Outcomes**

	N	Issued %	Covered %	In scope %
<b>Issued cases</b>	<b>4165</b>			
<i>Outstanding</i>	0	0		
<b>Covered</b>	<b>4165</b>	100		
<i>Broken appointment</i>	0		0	
<i>Other unproductive</i>	190		5	
<i>No direct contact: 15+ calls</i>	517		12	
<i>Ineligible</i>	146		4	
<i>Disconnected numbers</i>	291		7	
<b>In scope</b>	<b>3021</b>		<b>73</b>	
<i>Refusals</i>	254		6	8
<i>Fully productive</i>	2757		66	91
<i>Partially productive</i>	10		0	0
<b>Total productive</b>	<b>2767</b>		<b>66</b>	<b>91</b>

The response rate for the Outcomes stage is shown broken down by the Jobcentre Plus group (Table B.6) and General group (Table B.7).

The response rates for the General group is higher than for the Jobcentre Plus group, looking at the in-scope response rate this is 93 per cent and 90 per cent respectively. In terms of the covered sample, this equates to 73 per cent for the General group and 64 per cent for the Jobcentre Plus group.

**Table B.6 Response rate for Jobcentre Plus group at Outcomes**

	N	Issued %	Covered %	In scope %
<b>Issued cases</b>	<b>2924</b>			
<i>Broken appointment</i>	0		0	
<i>Other unproductive</i>	140		5	
<i>No direct contact: 15+ calls</i>	402		14	
<i>Ineligible</i>	114		4	
<i>Disconnected numbers</i>	218		7	
<b>In scope</b>	<b>2050</b>		<b>70</b>	
<i>Refusals</i>	189		6	9
<i>Fully productive</i>	1856		63	90
<i>Partially productive</i>	5		0	0
<b>Total productive</b>	<b>1861</b>		<b>64</b>	<b>90</b>

**Table B.7 Response rate for General group at Outcomes**

	N	Issued %	Covered %	In scope %
<b>Issued cases</b>	<b>1241</b>			
<i>Broken appointment</i>	0		0	
<i>Other unproductive</i>	50		4	
<i>No direct contact: 15+ calls</i>	115		9	
<i>Ineligible</i>	32		3	
<i>Disconnected numbers</i>	73		6	
<b>In scope</b>	<b>971</b>		<b>78</b>	
<i>Refusals</i>	65		5	7
<i>Fully productive</i>	901		73	92
<i>Partially productive</i>	5		0	1
<b>Total productive</b>	<b>906</b>		<b>73</b>	<b>93</b>

#### **Methods used to increase response rates**

Several methods were employed to increase the response rate at both the Baseline and the Outcomes stages of fieldwork.

At the Baseline stage the target response rate was 64 per cent. However, following the first couple of tranches of fieldwork the response rate was lower than anticipated. In order to try increase the response rate several actions were taken, which affected the last three tranches of the Baseline fieldwork period.

The actions that were taken during the Baseline fieldwork period to boost the response rate were:

- £5 incentive payment to respondents who completed an interview;
- The amount of time between the CM Options service call and the first interview was reduced;
- The opt-out letter was redrafted and redesigned to make it less formal;
- The CATI program was changed so that respondents who could not remember their CM Options service contact were interviewed and not screened out.

The target response rate for the Outcomes stage of fieldwork was 73 per cent. However, following the first tranche of fieldwork the response rate was lower than anticipated. We explored several possibilities as to why the response rate was low; including investigating whether the coding of ineligible cases was being done correctly and also whether using an incentive may boost response.

The actions that were taken during the Outcomes fieldwork period to boost the response rate were:

- The telephone unit re-contacted respondents who refused to take part in the Outcomes interview at first contact, providing they were classified as 'soft refusals';
- Letters (with reply slips and freepost envelopes) were sent to all respondents at the end of the tranche who had been coded as either a non-contact following 15 attempts or where the known contact number had been disconnected. These letters asked the respondents to return the slip with the updated contact details for the respondent. Where these were received, the information held on the respondent was updated and contact re-attempted.

These measures were used in tranches one to four but the letters were not sent for tranches five and six. The measures to boost response rate were not used in the final two tranches due to the short period of time between when the fieldwork ended and when the final data was required.

In total 204 letters were sent to respondents following initial fieldwork, which resulted in 14 returned slips with new contact details. With regards to the re-issuing of soft refusals, this resulted in 13 productive interviews.

## **B.3 Description of analysis techniques used**

### **B.3.1 Derived variables**

Because the final data was the product of a complex CATI program, some variables needed for analysis had to be derived from several existing variables. For this task, a specialist data manager was involved in creating suitable variables, working from several specifications from researchers.

Most of the derived variables created fall into the following types:

1. Key demographic variables such as the working status of the family, or the age of the youngest relevant child.
2. Variables which join together two questions in the original data, because one had been answered by parents with care and the other by non-resident parents.
3. Combining responses from a number of variables to create a particular measure such as whether the respondent paid or received child maintenance and/or other financial support.

### **B.3.2 Latent class analysis**

The typology of separation types and the typology of contact with the CM Options service were constructed using latent class analysis (LCA). This is a multivariate statistical approach used to categorise individuals into different groups or 'latent classes' according to their responses to a series of questions. Essentially, LCA consists of: a) identifying the number of classes that best fit the data; and b) generating probabilities, per respondent, of class membership. Once the model has been estimated, an individual is assigned to the class for which s/he has the highest probability. The software Latent Gold version 4.0 was used to carry out this analysis

([http://www.statisticalinnovations.com/products/latentgold\\_v4.html](http://www.statisticalinnovations.com/products/latentgold_v4.html)).

A key aspect of LCA is identifying the number of latent classes that best fits the data. To do this we examined a range of models with different numbers of classes (from two to ten classes). There is no definitive method of determining the optimal number of classes and because models with different numbers of latent classes are not nested we must rely on measures of fit such as Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC) and the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC). In comparing different models with the same set of data, models with the lowest value of these information criteria are preferred. Furthermore, the resulting classes have to be

interpreted. For the purposes of this analysis both formal and informal criteria were used.

The two typologies are examined in more detail below:

### (1) Separation Types

**Table B.8 Latent class models and goodness of fit statistics, separation types**

	Model with 4 clusters	Model with 5 clusters	Model with 6 clusters
Log-likelihood (LL)	-27607	-27331	-27060
BIC (based on LL)	56022	55652	55293
AIC (based on LL)	55417	54911	54416
AIC3 (based on LL)	55519	55036	54564
Entropy R-squared	0.97	0.93	0.90
Classification errors	0.01	0.04	0.06

Note: BIC (Bayesian Information Criterion), AIC (Akaike Information Criterion), AIC3 (Akaike Information Criterion 3)

According to the BIC, AIC and AIC3, the number of classes should be greater than ten. However, with this many classes, some classes were not readily interpretable and class sizes were very small. Thus, the choice of model was made using less formal considerations.

Class size and probabilities of class membership for the latent class models of separation types were examined. The size of the clusters showed that models with six or more classes had one group with very few cases, ruling out a solution with more than five clusters for practical purposes. On the other hand, the solution with four classes was felt to be missing an important class which was revealed under the five-class solution.

The probabilities of class membership also suggested that a five-cluster model was a good model. Ideally, each individual would have a probability of one of being in one class and zero of being in other classes, but in reality this figure is lower. An examination of the average membership probabilities indicated that for a model with five clusters, the lowest average membership probability in any class was 0.90. The equivalent value for a model with six clusters was 0.87. This suggests that a model with five clusters fits the data just as well, if not better than,

a model with six or more clusters (the entropy R-squared and percentage of classification errors also suggest this – see Table B.8). The principle of parsimony (a model with fewer parameters that fits the data just as well should be preferred over one with more parameters) therefore indicated that a model with five clusters was a better solution than a model with six clusters.

Taking all of the above into consideration we chose a model with five latent classes. Table B.9 shows the variables used in the latent class analysis and how they relate to each cluster.

**Table B.9 Variables in latent class analysis, by separation type**

	Separation type					
	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Cluster 5	Total
<i>Previous relationship status</i>						
Married	43	47	33	53	0	42
Living together	42	43	50	42	0	42
Not living together	0	0	6	0	100	6
Not a couple	15	10	11	4	0	11
<i>Friendliness of current relationship</i>						
Hardly any contact	100	+	0	0	87	46
Very or quite friendly	0	35	92	15	5	25
Neither friendly nor unfriendly	0	40	8	60	5	20
Not very or not at all friendly	0	25	0	25	2	9
<i>Nature of break-up</i>						
Was not in a relationship	0	0	6	0	98	6
Very bitter	54	38	13	36	0	38
Quite bitter	21	30	16	36	1	23
Neither bitter nor friendly	19	23	32	25	1	22
Quite friendly or very friendly	6	10	33	3	0	11
<i>Time since separation</i>						
Last 3 months	13	19	53	39	25	13
3 months - 1 year	9	9	13	18	11	9
1 year - 2 years	10	12	9	13	11	10
3 years - 4 years	13	17	11	12	13	13
5 years or more	56	43	14	17	40	56
<i>Level of face-to-face contact between NRP and child</i>						
Once a week or more	12	12	94	94	2	38
Once/twice a month	9	56	6	1	8	17
Few times/less a year	8	17	0	+	4	7
Other contact	6	3	0	1	6	4



No contact	64	12	0	3	80	34
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<i>Whether discusses financial matters with ex-partner, and how easy this is</i>						
Discusses & finds it easy	2	10	34	6	2	10
Discusses & finds it difficult	12	27	7	40	7	18
Discusses & finds it neither easy/difficult	7	10	10	15	9	9
Never discusses but would find it easy	8	15	44	6	9	15
Never discusses but would find it difficult	72	39	6	34	72	48

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<i>Frequency of contact between ex-partners</i>						
Once a week or more	0	+	97	100	0	32
Once/ twice a month	0	62	3	0	7	14
A few times a year	12	37	0	0	13	14
No contact	88	0	0	0	79	40

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<i>Who makes the main decisions about the child</i>						
Mainly by PWC	94	86	36	72	99	79
Other	6	14	64	28	1	21

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<i>Length of relationship</i>						
Not a couple or less than 1 year	7	5	9	2	100	11
1 to 2 years	11	9	8	4	0	9
2 to 4 years	16	17	21	13	0	16
4 to 6 years	16	13	17	14	0	15
6 to 8 years	12	13	10	10	0	11
8 to 11 years	13	13	15	17	0	13
11 to 15 years	24	29	20	39	0	26

The five clusters are described below.

### ***Cluster 1: Long-term, bitter***

Typically, this group had the following characteristics:

- Likely to have been living together (married or cohabiting);
- Separated from ex for long period of time;
- Very bitter break-up;
- No current contact with ex-partner;
- No contact between non-resident parent and child;
- Do not discuss financial matters with ex-partner and doing so would be difficult;
- Decisions about child mainly made by parent with care.

**Cluster 2: Medium-term, contact**

Typically, this group had the following characteristics:

- Likely to have been living together (married or cohabiting);
- Separated from ex for a medium length of time;
- Mix of how bitter break-up was;
- Mix of how often parent sees ex-partner;
- Mix of how often non-resident parent sees child;
- Discuss financial matters with ex-partner but doing so is difficult;
- Decisions mainly made by parent with care.

**Cluster 3: Recent, friendly, contact**

Typically, this group had the following characteristics:

- Likely to have been living together (mainly cohabiting);
- Separated for a short period of time;
- Break-up was quite friendly;
- Good current relationship with ex-partner;
- Regular contact with ex-partner;
- Regular contact between non-resident parent and child;
- Discusses financial matters with ex-partner and finds this easy;
- Decisions are made by both parent with care and non-resident parent.

**Cluster 4: Recent, mixed, contact**

Typically, this group had the following characteristics:

- Likely to have been living together (mainly married);
- Separated for a short period of time;
- Mix of how bitter break-up was;
- Current relationship with ex-partner is neither friendly nor unfriendly;
- Regular contact with ex-partner;
- Regular contact between non-resident parent and child;
- Discusses financial matters with ex-partner but finds this difficult;
- Decisions are made by the parent with care.

**Cluster 5: Never in a relationship**

Typically, this group had the following characteristics:

- Were not in a relationship with the other parent at the time of conception;
- No current contact with ex-partner;
- No contact between non-resident parent and child;
- Never discusses financial matters with ex-partner and would find this difficult;
- Decisions made by the parent with care.

## (2) Use of the CM Options service

**Table B.10 Latent class models and goodness of fit statistics, use of CM Options service**

	Model with 4 clusters	Model with 5 clusters	Model with 6 clusters
Log-likelihood (LL)	-23563	-23282	-23178
BIC (based on LL)	47617	47204	47142
AIC (based on LL)	47252	46729	46558
AIC3 (based on LL)	47315	46811	46659
Entropy R-squared	0.75	0.76	0.74
Classification errors	0.11	0.13	0.15

Note: BIC (Bayesian Information Criterion), AIC (Akaike Information Criterion), AIC3 (Akaike Information Criterion 3)

According to the BIC, a solution with seven classes should be chosen, while both the AIC and AIC3 suggested the number of classes to be greater than ten. However, with this many classes, some classes were not readily interpretable and one class size was too small. Thus, the choice of model was made using less formal considerations.

Class size, probabilities of class membership and parsimony for the latent class models of CM Options service use were examined. The four-cluster model was thought to be the best solution because respondents within each class were reasonably homogenous in terms of their responses.

The probabilities of class membership also suggested that a five-cluster model was a good model. Ideally, each individual would have a probability of one of being in one class and zero of being in other classes, but in reality this figure is lower. An examination of the average membership probabilities indicated that for a model with four clusters, the lowest average membership probability in any class was 0.85. The equivalent value for a model with five clusters was 0.77. This suggests that a model with four clusters fits the data just as well, if not better than, a model with five or more clusters (the entropy R-squared and percentage of classification errors also suggest this – see Table B.10). The principle of parsimony (a model with fewer parameters that fits the data just as well should be

preferred over one with more parameters) therefore indicated that a model with four clusters was a better solution than a model with five clusters.

Taking all of the above into consideration we chose a model with four latent classes. Table B.11 shows the variables used in the latent class analysis and how they relate to each cluster.

**Table B.11 Variables in latent class analysis, by use of CM Options service**

	Separation type				Total
	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	
<i>Contact type</i>					
Inbound	35	52	12	9	35
Outbound	65	48	88	91	65
<i>Whether call agent understood respondent's situation, at Baseline</i>					
Strongly agree	3	80	74	1	41
Agree	89	20	26	69	52
Neither agree nor disagree	5	0	0	17	4
Disagree or strongly disagree	4	0	0	13	3
<i>Whether call agent listened to the respondent, at Baseline</i>					
Strongly agree	11	98	92	4	53
Agree	84	2	8	78	43
Neither or disagree	5	0	0	18	4
<i>Whether discussed family circumstances, at Baseline</i>					
Yes	92	99	82	51	88
No	8	1	18	49	12
<i>Whether discussed relationship with ex-partner, at Baseline</i>					
Yes	83	92	58	31	76
No	17	8	42	69	24
<i>Whether discussed child maintenance options, at Baseline</i>					
Yes	88	98	33	14	74
No	12	2	67	86	26
<i>Whether discussed making a private arrangement, at Baseline</i>					
Yes	68	87	27	14	62
No	32	13	73	86	38

<i>Whether discussed using the CSA, at Baseline</i>					
Yes	67	89	33	24	65
No	33	11	67	76	35
<i>Whether discussed barriers to making a child maintenance arrangement, at Baseline</i>					
Yes	32	41	21	9	31
No	68	59	79	91	69
<i>Whether looked at the CM Options service website, at Baseline</i>					
Yes	15	28	4	6	17
No	85	72	96	94	83
<i>Overall contact with CM Options</i>					
Tel. at both stages	11	10	8	8	10
Tel. at Baseline only	89	90	92	92	90
<i>Whether signposted and followed up, at Baseline</i>					
Not signposted	52	34	77	83	53
Signposted but did not follow up	37	44	21	15	34
Signposted and did follow up	11	22	3	3	13
<i>Whether sent leaflets and whether read them, at Baseline</i>					
Not sent leaflet	41	28	67	69	43
Sent leaflets but did not read them	8	8	11	7	8
Sent leaflets and read some	7	9	6	6	8
Sent leaflets and did read them	44	56	17	18	41
<i>Length of call at Baseline</i>					
1 minute or less	1	0	4	12	2
5 to 10 minutes	37	25	73	71	42
15 to 30 minutes	49	57	22	16	44
45 minutes or more	14	18	1	1	12

The four clusters are described below.

**Group 1: High level of in-depth, personalised contact**

Typically, this group had the following characteristics:

- An above average call length;
- Likely to have made multiple calls;

- Very positive reaction to CM Options service agent;
- Discussed family circumstances and their relationship with their ex-partner;
- Discussed various child maintenance options including private arrangements and CSA arrangements;
- Discussed the barriers to setting up an arrangement;
- Most likely to have used the website;
- Most likely to have been sent and read leaflets.

### ***Group 2: Moderate level of in-depth, personalised contact***

Typically, this group had the following characteristics:

- An above average call length;
- Likely to have made multiple calls;
- Positive reaction to CM Options service agent;
- Discussed family circumstances and their relationship with their ex-partner;
- Discussed various child maintenance options including private arrangements and CSA arrangements;
- Had not used the website;
- More likely than Group 3 and Group 4 to have been sent a leaflet and read it.

### ***Group 3: Low to moderate level of personalised contact***

Typically, this group had the following characteristics:

- Short length call;
- Single call;
- Very positive experience of the CM Options service agent;
- Had discussed family circumstances but less likely than Group 1 and Group 2 to have discussed relationship with ex-partner;
- Had not discussed various child maintenance options;
- Had not used the website;
- Had not been sent leaflets.

### ***Group 4: Brief, less personalised contact***

Typically, this group had the following characteristics:

- Short length call;
- Single call;
- Mixed experience of call agent;
- Half had discussed family circumstances;
- Had not discussed various child maintenance options;
- Had not used the website;
- Had not been sent leaflets.

### **B.3.3 Propensity score matching**

#### **Matching the moderate to high user and matched low user comparison group**

In order to estimate the effect of CM Options on the user group it is vital that as far as possible any differences other than use of the CM Options service between the 'moderate to high use' group and matched 'low use' comparison group that might generate a difference in outcomes are removed. For instance, 11 per cent of the 'moderate to high use' group said at the time of the Baseline survey that they found it easy to discuss financial matters with their ex-partner, compared to just six per cent of those in our 'low-use group'. Ability to discuss financial matters is a strong predictor of subsequent maintenance arrangements, so this imbalance between the groups would lead to differences in the rate of maintenance arrangements irrespective of CM Options. Differences such as these have to be removed, or at least reduced, to make the comparison valid.

The differences are reduced by matching the 'moderate to high use' and 'low use' groups across as many of the known and observed predictors of maintenance arrangements as possible. The method of matching we have used is 'propensity score matching', whereby the difference between the groups is modelled (using all the known and observed predictors of maintenance as predictors in a logistic regression model) and the 'propensity' of being in the 'moderate to high use' group is estimated per person. The propensity score is essentially an estimated probability of being in the 'moderate to high use' group: parents with characteristics that are more prevalent in the 'moderate to high use' group than in the matched low user comparison group will have a high probability, or propensity score; parents with characteristics that are more prevalent in the matched low user comparison group will have a low probability or propensity score. Once the propensity score is estimated per person the matched low user comparison group is weighted<sup>73</sup> so as to ensure the same profile of propensity scores in each group. This, on average, has the effect of bringing the two groups closer on all the observed variables.

Assuming that the propensity score model includes all factors that are predictive of being in one or other group and predictive of our outcomes (i.e. primarily, whether or not parents have set up arrangements subsequent to contact with CM Options), then it has been established that the difference between two propensity score matched groups will give an unbiased estimate of the 'average effect' of being in the 'treatment' group (where in this case the 'treatment' group is the 'moderate to

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<sup>73</sup> Using kernel matching with a (Stata default) bandwidth of 0.06.

high' use group). See Bryson et al (2002) for a more detailed explanation of propensity score matching. Of course, we cannot be sure that we have captured all the variables needed for unbiased estimation in our survey, but we are confident that we have covered all of those known to be predictive of outcomes. Nevertheless, we cannot rule out the possibility of there being some unobserved factors that differ between the matched groups and that may lead to bias in our estimates of effect.

Table B.12 below shows how the matching has worked in practice. For each variable we have used in the matching: the first column of figures shows the profile for the 'moderate to high use' group; the second column shows the profile of the matched 'low use' comparison group prior to matching; and the third column shows the profile of the matched 'low use' comparison group after matching. The example of 'being able to discuss financial matters' is the fourth variable in the table. The starting difference, where 11 per cent of the 'moderate to high use' group said at the time of the Baseline survey that they found it easy to discuss financial matters with their ex-partner, compared to just six per cent of those in our matched low user comparison group, has been reduced to 11 per cent compared to 12 per cent after the matching. Not a perfect match, but much closer.



**Table B.12 Variables used in propensity score matching before and after matching**

Variable		Moderate to high use group	Low use comparison group before matching	Low use comparison group after matching
		%	%	%
<i>Relationship status between respondent and ex-partner</i>				
	1 Married/Civil Partnership	39	43	39
	2 Couple – living together	43	40	43
	3 Not a couple	6	7	6
	4 Couple – not living together	12	10	12
<i>Friendliness of relationship between ex-partners at the time of the Baseline interview</i>				
	-1 Hardly any contact	46	49	45
	1 Very friendly	6	6	5
	2 Quite friendly	21	20	24
	3 Neither friendly nor unfriendly	19	17	17
	4 Not very friendly	3	4	3
	5 Not at all friendly	5	5	6
<i>Level of face-to-face contact between non-resident parent and child</i>				
	1 Face-to-face contact once a week or more	38	35	42
	2 Face-to-face contact once/twice a month	16	20	15
	3 Face-to-face contact few times/less a year	8	7	7
	4 Non-face-to-face contact	4	4	5
	5 No contact	35	35	32
<i>Whether discussed financial matters and ease of discussion</i>				
	1 Discusses and finds it easy	11	6	12
	2 Discusses and finds it difficult	16	14	14
	3 Discusses and finds it neither easy/difficult	10	10	10
	4 Never discusses but would find it easy	16	18	16
	5 Never discusses but would find it difficult	47	51	48
<i>Frequency of contact between ex-partners</i>				
	1 Once a week or more	33	27	34

	2 Once or twice a month	14	15	12
	3 A few times a year	13	14	14
	4 No contact	41	44	40
<hr/>				
<i>Who makes the main decisions</i>	1 Mainly by PWC	80	83	81
	2 Mainly by NRP	20	17	19
<hr/>				
<i>Acrimony of separation</i>	1 Was not in a relationship when child conceived	6	7	6
	2 Very bitter	37	38	36
	3 Quite bitter	24	22	24
	4 Neither bitter nor friendly	23	24	23
	5 Quite friendly or very friendly	11	10	11
<hr/>				
<i>Length of relationship between respondent and ex-partner(years)</i>	1 NA - not a couple	7	7	7
	2 Less than 1 year	5	4	6
	3 1 to 2 years	9	7	12
	4 2 to 4 years	18	16	15
	5 4 to 6 years	15	12	13
	6 6 to 8 years	12	11	10
	7 8 to 11 years	13	13	13
	8 11 to 15 years	12	12	13
	9 15+ years	11	19	12
<hr/>				
<i>Single/Couple household</i>	1 Single-respondent only	84	82	86
	2 Couple-respondent and partner	7	11	7
	3 Couple-respondent and other parent(as the partner/non-partner)	9	7	7
<hr/>				
<i>Whether respondent has a child aged 0-5</i>	1 Has child aged 0 to 5	57	47	58
	2 No child aged 0 to 5	43	53	42
<hr/>				
<i>Whether respondent has a child aged 6-11</i>	1 Has child aged 6 to 11	45	47	43
	2 No child aged 6 to 11	55	53	57
<hr/>				
<i>Number of children</i>	1	39	35	44
	2	33	42	32
	3	17	15	16
	4	11	8	8
<hr/>				
<i>Working status</i>	1 Couple both working	3	2	3

	2 Couple one working	4	3	4
	3 Couple neither working	6	4	5
	4 Lone working	27	27	27
	5 Lone not working	60	64	62
<hr/>				
<i>Income</i>	-1 Income unknown	15	19	17
	1 Less than £5,000	7	5	7
	2 £5,001 to £10,000	30	29	29
	3 £10,001 to £15,000	23	22	22
	4 £15,001 to £20,000	15	15	15
	5 £20,001 to £25,000	6	4	5
	6 £25,001 plus	5	7	5
<hr/>				
<i>Benefit status</i>	1 Claims low income benefit	61	57	61
	2 Does not claim a low income benefit	39	43	39
<hr/>				
<i>Highest qualification</i>	-1 no qualifications	31	34	33
	1 Degree or degree equivalent, and above	11	11	9
	2 Another Higher Education qualification below degree level,	10	7	7
	3 Any A levels, level 3 vocational qualifications, or any trade apprenticeships	22	20	22
	5 Any GCSE / O level grade A*-C, CSE grade 1, level 2 vocational	20	18	20
	6 Any GCSE at D-G, CSE grade 2-5, qualifications at vocational	5	7	7
	7 Other qualifications level unknown	3	4	4
<hr/>				
<i>Ethnicity</i>	1 White	83	85	84
	2 Mixed, Asian, Asian British, Chinese or other	8	7	9
	4 Black or Black British	9	9	7
<hr/>				
<i>Disability</i>	1 Yes	22	22	17
	2 No	78	78	83
<hr/>				
<i>Gender</i>	1 Male	10	10	8
	2 Female	90	90	92
<hr/>				
<i>Respondents' age</i>	1 25 or under	19	14	20

	2 26 to 30	19	17	20
	3 31 to 35	17	19	17
	4 36 to 40	19	16	17
	5 41 to 45	16	17	14
	6 46 to 50	8	11	9
	7 51+	3	6	3
<hr/>				
<i>PWC/NRP status</i>	1 PWC	98	96	98
	2 NRP or shared	2	4	2
<hr/>				
<i>Whether NRP has contact with child</i>	1 Yes	66	66	69
	2 No	34	34	31
<hr/>				
<i>Socio-economic class</i>	1 Unemployed	84	84	84
	2 Skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled manual workers	3	4	3
	3 Other	13	13	13
<hr/>				
<i>Separation types</i>	Long-term, bitter	41	44	40
	Medium-term, contact	21	23	20
	Recent, friendly, contact	18	14	20
	Recent, mixed, contact	15	13	15
	Never in a relationship	6	6	5
<hr/>				
<i>Length of separation</i>	-1 not a couple	9	10	10
	1 last 3 months	25	18	26
	2-3 months to a year and a half	15	11	15
	3 2 year to 4 years	16	18	15
	4 5 years to 9 years	19	24	19
	5 10 years+	18	18	16

### B.3.4 Maintenance arrangements at the time of the CM Options call

The surveys carried out for the evaluation did not capture definitive data on whether or not a maintenance arrangement was in place at the time of the first CM Options call. However, for those who had a maintenance arrangement in place at the time of the Baseline interview (two to four months after their CM Options call) parents were asked when this arrangement started and from this, status at the time of the CM Options call can be inferred. What is less clear is whether there are a group of parents without a maintenance arrangement in place at the time of the Baseline interview who did have an arrangement in place at the time of the CM

Options call. In other words, there *may* be a group of people whose arrangements ended very soon after their CM Options call and we cannot identify this group. This has a number of implications for the analysis reported here, none of which we believe to be a serious cause for concern.

Firstly, for the analysis that is based on the sub-group of those of particular interest to the CM Options service, namely, those without a maintenance arrangement in at the time of the CM Options call, we will have incorrectly included in this sub-group the group of parents whose arrangements were in place at the time but ended very soon after. This could lead to a very slight overestimation of the effect of CM Options. This is because if CM Options is effective then we would expect this group of 'post-CM Options dissolved arrangements' to be smaller in the 'moderate to high use' group than the matched 'low use' comparison group *if* one benefit of CM Options is to help keep these arrangements going. This means, all else being equal, we would have slightly more 'no maintenance' outcomes in both groups than we ought to have but that this will be more exaggerated in the matched low user comparison group. This would lead to the overestimation of impact.

Secondly, and conversely, for the analysis based on 'all CM Options Jobcentre Plus calls' (irrespective of whether or not a maintenance arrangement was in place at the time of the call), we might expect the non-identification of the 'soon dissolved arrangement' group to lead to a slight underestimation of effect size. This is because we cannot include maintenance at the time of the call in the matching. And if those with a maintenance arrangement in place are more likely to have a short call with CM Options then this group may consequently be over-represented in the matched 'low use' comparison group even after matching. In terms of subsequent outcomes this would lead to the matched 'low use' comparison group starting 'ahead' of our 'moderate to high use' group and effect size being underestimated. Having looked closely at our results, however, we think the likelihood of serious underestimation is very small. This is because the percentage of people who had a *continued* maintenance arrangement between the CM Options call and the Baseline interview is similar in our moderate to high user and matched 'low use' comparison group, rather than higher in the comparison group. This suggests to us that over-representation of those with a maintenance arrangement at the time of the CM Options call in the matched 'low use' comparison group is implausible.

### **B.3.5 Weighting**

For the Baseline interview, parents were selected from all those that made or received a first call by CM Options service between the months February to September 2009. All calls which did not elicit a telephone number or address, which were anonymised, or where the person refused subsequent contact after the call, were excluded from selection. Low users of the service (based on the amount of information collected during the call) were over-sampled in tranches four to six to ensure an adequate number were selected. To correct for this over-sampling as well as unequal selection probabilities between months, a selection weight was calculated. This selection weight was then calibrated so that the weighted distribution of respondents matched the overall distribution of all first calls made or received by Child Maintenance Options service for the information collected during the call. This information was: the number of knowledge-based items discussed during the call, the number of signposting items referred to during the call, and the number of leaflets referred to during the call. We calibrated to these counts within two groups based on whether the parent was referred by Jobcentre Plus or not, as these two groups were analysed separately. The aim of the calibration was to reduce non-response bias resulting from differential non-response and also to adjust for those calls mentioned above which were excluded from selection. These weights were then trimmed at the five per cent and 95 per cent percentiles. The unweighted and weighted distributions for the sample are given in Table B.13 below.

**Table B.13 Weighted and Unweighted sample distributions**

		Respondents Unweighted		Respondents Weighted (final weights trimmed)		Population	
		JCP referral		JCP referral		JCP referral	
		No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
		%	%	%	%	%	%
<i>Knowledge Base</i>							
<i>count</i>							
	none	3.5	16.3	6.4	24.0	6.8	24.1
	1-2	4.9	18.1	11.4	19.1	15.3	19.2
	3	3.4	9.9	7.1	8.7	7.5	8.8
	4	6.1	8.4	8.7	7.4	8.2	7.4
	5	5.2	6.9	7.6	5.8	7.2	5.8
	6	8.3	8.1	9.2	6.6	8.6	6.6
	7	8.6	7.3	8.9	5.9	8.3	5.9
	8	12.4	6.8	9.4	5.9	8.8	5.9
	9	9.6	4.9	7.5	4.2	7.0	4.2
	10	6.4	3.2	5.4	3.0	5.1	3.0
	11	5.3	2.2	3.9	2.1	3.7	2.1
	12	5.8	1.8	3.1	1.7	2.8	1.7
	13	4.2	1.7	2.5	1.4	2.2	1.4
	14+	16.2	4.5	9.0	4.2	8.4	4.1
<i>Leaflet count</i>							
	0	31.9	44.8	64.4	40.1	66.7	40.3
	1	27.9	38.1	14.8	43.5	13.8	43.6
	2	23.0	11.3	12.2	10.9	11.4	10.9
	3	9.6	3.3	4.5	3.2	4.2	3.1
	4+	7.6	2.6	4.1	2.3	3.9	2.1
<i>Signposting count</i>							
	0	35.0	79.3	38.3	80.4	39.5	80.7
	1	40.8	13.8	44.7	13.3	44.3	13.3
	2	14.1	4.3	9.9	3.9	9.5	3.8
	3+	10.1	2.6	7.2	2.4	6.7	2.3
TOTAL		1318	3136	874	3580	20227	77432

For the Outcomes stage interviews, all Baseline respondents who agreed to be re-contacted were selected. A non-response model was fitted using information collected at the Baseline interview. Since only six per cent of the sample did not agree to be re-contacted for this second interview, a separate regression was not

run to model refusal of contact. Rather, these people were included as non-respondents in the non-response model.

The variables found to be related to response were: contact type with CM Options service (whether the call to CM Options service was an inbound or outbound call), whether the child lived with the respondent more than half the time or not, whether the maintenance arrangement was made before or after contact with CM Options, whether the non-resident parent had any contact with the child, whether the break-up of the relationship with the non-resident parent was bitter or harmonious, the paid working household status, the highest educational qualification of the respondent, and whether the respondent had a long-standing physical or mental health condition or disability. The full model is given in Table B.14. The response propensities obtained from the model were then combined with the Baseline weights to form a final Outcomes weight. The top one per cent of weights were trimmed.

<b>Table B.14 Weighting model</b>						
<b>Dependent variable: 1 if responder, 0 if non-responder</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>Wald</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>Exp(B)</b>
<i>Contact Type</i>						
Inbound	0.18	0.09	3.97	1	0.05	1.20
Outbound	(Baseline)					
<i>Does the child live with the respondent more than half the time?</i>						
Yes	-0.21	0.10	4.80	1	0.03	0.81
No (half the time or less)	(Baseline)					
<i>Whether arrangement was made before or after contact with CM Options</i>			18.88	4	0.00	
Arrangement made before contact with CM Options	0.16	0.11	2.00	1	0.16	1.17
Arrangement in the process of being set up	0.12	0.24	0.25	1	0.61	1.13
No arrangement, don't know or shared, or not applicable	-0.18	0.10	3.06	1	0.08	0.83
Other financial arrangement	0.01	0.17	0.01	1	0.93	1.01
Arrangement made after contact with CM Options	(Baseline)					
<i>Whether NRP has contact with child</i>						
Yes	-0.16	0.07	4.77	1	0.03	0.85
No	(Baseline)					
<i>How would you describe the break-up of</i>			10.88	4	0.03	



<i>your relationship?</i>						
Quite bitter	0.10	0.09	1.45	1	0.23	1.11
Neither bitter nor friendly	0.14	0.09	2.58	1	0.11	1.15
Quite friendly or very friendly	-0.19	0.10	3.40	1	0.07	0.83
Was not in a relationship	0.14	0.15	0.91	1	0.34	1.15
Very bitter	(Baseline)					
<i>Paid working household status</i>						
			17.76	4	0.00	
Couple both working	-0.42	0.15	7.58	1	0.01	0.66
Couple only one working	-0.11	0.14	0.65	1	0.42	0.89
Couple neither working	0.18	0.14	1.64	1	0.20	1.19
Lone working	0.19	0.08	4.96	1	0.03	1.21
Lone not working	(Baseline)					
<i>Highest qualification of the respondent</i>						
			36.97	6	0.00	
A degree or equivalent	0.40	0.12	11.23	1	0.00	1.49
Another Higher Education qualification	0.65	0.14	21.46	1	0.00	1.92
below degree level						
Any A levels, level 3 vocational	0.30	0.09	11.17	1	0.00	1.35
qualifications or any trade						
apprenticeships						
Any GCSE / O level grade A*-C, CSE	0.26	0.09	7.62	1	0.01	1.29
grade 1, level 2 vocation						
Any GCSE at D-G, CSE grade 2-5,	0.14	0.15	0.81	1	0.37	1.15
qualifications at vocational						
Any other qualifications: level unknown?	-0.17	0.17	1.11	1	0.29	0.84
No qualifications	(Baseline)					
<i>Do you have a long-standing physical or mental health condition or disability?</i>						
Yes	0.20	0.08	5.89	1	0.02	1.22
No	(Baseline)					
Constant	0.53	0.16	11.30	1	0.00	1.70

# C Literature Review

A review of the research literature on child maintenance was conducted at the beginning of the evaluation of the CM Options service. The purpose of the literature review was to inform the design of the evaluation; specifically to feed into the questionnaires the factors that previous research found to influence the likelihood of making a successful child maintenance arrangements.

A range of factors emerged as being associated with making a successful child maintenance arrangement and were included in the surveys of CM Options service users. These variables were then used to inform the propensity score matching conducted as part of the effect analysis (see Appendix B, Table B.12).

This appendix gives an overview of the findings of the literature review; it starts by looking at the socio-demographic characteristics of parents that are associated with making a child maintenance arrangement; then it looks at contact between the non-resident parent and the child and contact between the non-resident parent and the parent with care; finally it looks at factors associated with the previous and current relationship between ex-partners.

## C.1 Socio-demographic factors

There were a range of socio-demographic factors, relating to the parent with care, non-resident parent and the child, which emerged from the literature as influencing whether child maintenance arrangements were set up and whether they were successful.

### C.1.1 Age

The age of the non-resident parent appears to be an important factor associated with whether a non-resident parent is likely to make a child maintenance payment. Older non-resident parents who appear to have postponed parenthood are more likely to pay child maintenance (Bradshaw et al, 1999; Wikeley, 2006), whereas younger non-resident parents have been identified in the literature as being at risk of not paying child maintenance (Skinner and Bradshaw, 2000).

### C.1.2 Household composition

Whether a parent with care has re-partnered following the separation from their ex-partner seems to be related to child maintenance; parents with care receiving child maintenance are more likely to be living with a new partner and also that this new partner is economically active (Bradshaw et al, 1999; Morris 2007). This

suggests that lone parents are more likely to be vulnerable to non-payment of child maintenance than their partnered counterparts.

### **C.1.3 Ethnicity**

Non-White ethnic groups appear to have more difficulty securing child maintenance payments than White parents with care. Huang, Mincy and Garfinkle (2005) note that where the parent with care belongs to a Black ethnic group compliance with child maintenance is lower and Morris (2007) states that mothers who describe themselves as Indian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani or 'other' also have greater difficulty in obtaining child maintenance.

### **C1.4 Age of child**

The age of the child is another factor which appears to influence child maintenance as it can feed into issues of the strength of the relationship between the non-resident parent and the child. Maclean and Eekelaar (1997) concluded that male non-resident parents who have children aged seven or above at the time of the relationship break-down are most likely to subsequently pay child maintenance; it is felt that this is related to the fact that these men feel well established as social, as well as biological, fathers.

### **C1.5 Income**

The income and employment status of both the parent with care and the non-resident parent are related to successful child maintenance arrangements. With regards to parents with care, those receiving child maintenance are more likely to be employed, home owners and financially comfortable (Atkinson and McKay, 2005; Bradshaw et al, 1999; Morris, 2007b).

With regards to non-resident parents, it appears that those in employment are more likely to pay child maintenance; Bradshaw et al (1999) states that according to his analysis of 'absent fathers' 74 per cent of current payers of child maintenance were in employment, compared with 34 per cent of fathers who had paid in the past and 28 per cent of fathers who had never paid child maintenance.

### **C.1.6 Benefit status**

Supporting what was stated above about parents with care who are more financially comfortable being more likely to be in receipt of child maintenance, those who claim income support or are social tenants are more likely to have never been paid child maintenance (Bradshaw et al, 1999; Lin, 2000; Morris, 2007a).

### **C.1.7 Educational Attainment**

The educational attainment of both parents with care is related to child maintenance; parents with care receiving child maintenance tend to be better educated (Morris, 2007a). Morris states that female parents with care who had no child maintenance arrangement tended to be poorly qualified (28 per cent had no formal qualifications) compared with 19 per cent of mothers with a CSA arrangement and 13 per cent of mothers with a court order.

## **C.2 Contact factors**

Contact emerges from the literature as being one of the most significant, and contentious, issues relating to child maintenance. This section examines firstly how contact between the non-resident parent and the child relates to child maintenance and then looks at contact between the ex-partners themselves.

### **C.2.1 Contact between non-resident parent and child**

Throughout the literature, a common theme is that more frequent contact between the non-resident parent and the child increases the likelihood of child maintenance payment (Atkinson, McKay and Dominy, 2006; Bradshaw et al, 1999; Hutson, 2007; Huang, Mincy and Garfinkle, 2005; Morris, 2007a; Skinner and Bradshaw 2000; Wikeley et al, 2001; Wikeley, 2006).

However, it is possible that the association is not completely straightforward as Morris (2007a) states that regression results from their analysis show that where a non-resident parent's contact with the child is daily there was less child maintenance compliance than when the contact was weekly or monthly. It has been suggested that when contact reaches such a high level, child maintenance compliance may be replaced by other forms of support, or deemed unnecessary.

A common theme in the literature is that the concepts of child maintenance and contact between the non-resident parent and the child are very closely linked in the minds of many parents. Contact and child maintenance payment can be used as a two-way bargaining tool; non-resident parents may withhold payment if they are not permitted to see their child and parents with care may stop contact if child maintenance isn't received (Atkinson and McKay, 2005; Atkinson, McKay and Dominy, 2006; Skevik, 2006; Wikeley, 2006; Wikeley, 2007).

### **C.2.2. Contact between ex-partners**

Contact between the non-resident parent and the parent with care also appeared as an important factor in the literature; where the non-resident parent has no contact with the parent with care the likelihood of paying child maintenance is reduced (Bradshaw et al, 1999; Skinner and Bradshaw, 2000).

### **C.3 Relationship factors**

A final area which emerges as related to successful child maintenance arrangements are those associated with the past and current relationships between ex-partners.

#### **C.3.1 Previous relationship status**

The previous relationship status, and in particular the level of formality, emerges from the literature as being related to the likelihood of having a successful child maintenance arrangement. Where parents with care and non-resident parents were previously married or cohabited there was an increased likelihood of payment of child maintenance, compared with those who had never been married or cohabited (Atkinson and McKay, 2005; Bradshaw et al, 1999; Burgess, 1998; Huang, Mincy and Garfinkle, 2005; Wikeley et al, 2001; Wikeley, 2006).

#### **C.3.2 Length of relationship between ex-partners**

In addition to the type of relationship that had been in place between ex-partners, the length of the relationship was also important with those relationships which lasted for longer periods being more likely to have compliant child maintenance arrangements (Bradshaw et al, 1999; Morris, 2007a).

#### **C.3.3 Current friendliness of relationship**

The quality of the current relationship between the non-resident parent and the parent with care is important as the literature suggests that whether the relationship is amicable or hostile impacts on the likelihood of payment. It appears that strong family ties and amicable relationships are associated with compliance whereas hostility is associated with non-payment (Bradshaw et al, 1999; Skevik, 2006; Wikeley, 2006).

#### **C.3.4 Involvement of non-resident parent**

Results from international research have shown that how involved the non-resident parent is, or believes they are, in the child's life can impact on their likelihood of being child maintenance compliant; the more involved a father feels the more likely he is to pay. Research from the US shows that fathers who have fewer opportunities to share in the major decisions concerning their children are least likely to pay child maintenance and in Australia failure to pay has been linked to feelings of 'loss of control' (Burgess, 1998).

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This report presents findings from a quantitative research study commissioned by the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission in 2008. The work was initiated to help the Commission assess the effect of the Child Maintenance Options service on parents who use the service. The research consisted of a two stage telephone survey (baseline and outcomes), conducted with 2,767 parents who had been in contact with the Child Maintenance Options service telephone helpline in 2009.

The report examines: the characteristics of the parents using the Child Maintenance Options service and how they use the service; the extent and nature of child maintenance arrangements made before and after service use; views of the service; and an estimate of its effectiveness.

If you would like to know more about the Commission's research, please contact:

[www.childmaintenance.org/en/contact](http://www.childmaintenance.org/en/contact) or  
[www.childmaintenance.org/en/contact/contact.asp](http://www.childmaintenance.org/en/contact/contact.asp)



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